

ASIAN STUDIES INQUIRY PROGRAM

Cultural Patterns in Asian Life



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Cultural Patterns in Asian Life

Social Studies Inquiry Program

Richard Gross and John Michaelis, Directors



ASIAN STUDIES INQUIRY PROGRAM

Cultural Patterns in Asian Life

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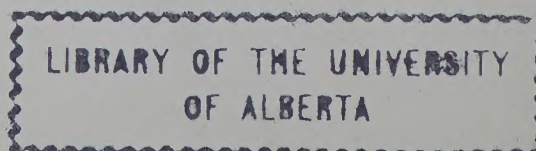
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Introduction

Philosophy and religion, government and law, marriage and the family, education and gainful work are all expressions of culture. To understand a culture it is necessary to understand the values and assumptions that underlie and permeate all aspects of life. The purpose of this study is to provide information on some institutions in Asian societies and to indicate some of the cultural values embedded in them. Another purpose is to develop an understanding of a set of attitudes that the sociologist calls *ethnocentrism*.

Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others. Although it may seem natural that men should prize their own particular ways of life, ethnocentrism spells danger when men do not allow themselves to look on the institutions and values of other cultures in an unbiased way. If we view other cultures as inferior, we ignore or fail to perceive their richness. The process of cultural borrowing, one of the primary ways a society modifies its institutions and reassesses its values, is thus slowed down. Ethnocentrism is also an important factor in intercultural conflicts. Frequently these begin as conflicts in values in the spheres of business, government, industry and trade, medicine, education, or religion.

Ethnocentrism denies the essential unity of mankind and celebrates its separateness. In some cases the repercussions may be quite serious. For example, the political

expression of ethnocentrism may be a foreign policy based upon erroneous notions and constricting values which can eventually lead to war.

Customs, manners, aesthetic ideals, and social prejudices vary from culture to culture and from century to century. What is acceptable in one culture may provoke disgust in another. In studying the first group of readings, *Customs and Attitudes*, ask yourself two questions: What determines the customs and standards in a society? and How does a culture develop its own set of values? The section entitled *Philosophy and Religion* reveals striking contrasts not only between the religious approaches of Asia and those of the West, but also between different variants of the same religion in different communities in Asia. Asian society, as any other, is structured around various and intermeshing groupings of people. Two basic forms of groupings are class and the family—the focus of the set of readings entitled *Caste, Class, and Family*. In reading these selections, ponder the question: How do class and family help shape patterns of life in Asia as compared to America? The last section, *Changing Patterns*, will give you an opportunity to assess the course and the effects of social, economic, and political changes in Asian life.



Etiquette

Cultural peculiarities are readily apprehended in the etiquette of a people. In this reading the author discusses and describes many cultural practices unique to Japan, bringing in American etiquette for comparison.

Each nation has its own rules of etiquette and Japan is no exception. Despite the outward westernization of the big cities and the apparent ease with which the younger urban Japanese have adopted western innovations, from cocktail bars and the opera to skin-tight levis and Beatlemania, and even the kiss and the handshake, the vast majority is still bound in tradition and traditional etiquette.

For years foreigners in Japan have been lamenting the Japanese “lack of manners,” applying their own western standards. It may come as a shock to some to learn that many Japanese, especially those who have never traveled abroad (the majority), consider certain western ways to be quite offensive.

The western custom of entering a house wearing one's coat is shocking to the Japanese who remove all outside garments such as topcoat, scarf and gloves in the entrance hall before taking off their shoes. And although slippers are worn within the house, they are always removed before entering a *tatami* (straw mat) floored room.

Also, one must be careful to avoid stepping on the black borders of the *tatami*.

As all who live in Japan know, gift giving is almost a ritual. The wrapping of the packages is in itself a minor art, varying with the occasion. A wedding gift, for instance, is not wrapped in the same way as a birthday or New Year's gift, nor is a simple “calling” gift.

For whereas the foreigner goes calling or arrives for dinner in a private home empty handed, the Japanese bear “calling” gifts of cake or candy, but seldom, if ever, flowers.

And whereas the foreigner promptly tears open a gift in the donor's presence, etiquette does not permit a Japanese to open a gift in the presence of the giver, and many are shocked at the sight of it being done.

When a foreigner—or any visitor—is invited to a meal in a Japanese home, infinite pains go into the making of the meal. The hostess endeavors to produce not only delicious food but also dishes which are a delight to the eye through

[†] “Etiquette,” *The East*, Vol. I, No. 5 (1965).

shape and color scheme. Nothing therefore can be more shocking than to see a guest "try" a little of this or that off his various plates, messing the plates up but not finishing any.

Rice too, when accepted, must be eaten to the last grain unless one wishes a second helping, in which case a mouthful is left at the bottom of the bowl, indicating that one is ready for more. Etiquette requires that when in doubt about a certain dish, it should be left untouched.

Japanese children are taught to blow their noses using both hands cupped over their handkerchief. The sight of a foreigner blowing single-handedly causes youngsters to stare in alarm and gently bred natives to look the other way in embarrassment.

The number 13 or Friday the 13th is not unlucky in Japan, but number 4 is. In Japanese, four is *shi* which also means "death." There are no No. 4 wards in Japanese hospitals. For the same reason, visiting a family on the fourth of the month to congratulate them on the birth of a child is scrupulously avoided.

The bow, which has not yet been totally replaced by the handshake, even in cosmopolitan Tokyo, is not only a form of greeting and leave-taking but is also made in token of gratitude or in making a request or an apology.

A lady in *kimono* removes her shawl and gloves when greeting an acquaintance in the street and wonders why the westerner remains so rudely bundled up when doing the same.

At a funeral service, all who come to pay their respects dress strictly in black. The ladies wear black *kimono* and *obi*, or foreign dress, and the men wear dark suits with black neckties and armbands. The

foreigner who appears in grey, brown or navy-blue shocks the Japanese mourners. On the other hand, mourning is seldom worn after the funeral but a period of mourning is observed which varies according to one's religion, from 35 to 50 days. During this period, mourners refrain from appearing at any festive events and no family celebrations are held. The first New Year following a death in the family, people refrain from sending New Year cards or making New Year calls on the bereaved, and they in turn neither send New Year's greetings nor put up New Year decorations.

So although etiquette in the West may be the noise you must not swallow your soup with, in the East it is the noise you *must* swallow your soup with to express your appreciation. Good manners are simply the technique of expressing consideration for the feelings of others by doing the right thing at the right time in the *right place*—or country.



What Makes a Woman Beautiful?

This reading discusses the criteria of feminine beauty during the various historical periods in traditional Japan. Although considerable attention is paid to specific cultural practices such as the use of cosmetics and the blackening of teeth, major emphasis is on the changing ideals of feminine beauty. According to Japanese standards, physical beauty alone does not make a woman beautiful, for her character, her actions, and her talents are also part of her appeal. While reading, keep in mind the question: Is beauty an objective condition or a subjective state?

What was a beautiful woman in Japan more than ten centuries ago? And just how has the idea of a beautiful woman changed during those centuries?

Simple answers to such involved questions are not easy. In this article, we will focus on the Heian period's ideal of feminine beauty, an ideal that lasted from the end of the 9th to the latter half of the 12th century, the most urbane age in Japanese history. Beginning with a few characteristic criteria of beauty, we will briefly trace its development until our present era.

A Nose To Be Forgotten

A Heian noblewoman's first concern was with her hair. Black hair in particular was

a symbol of beauty for ladies of the court as well as for the populace. *Kurokami* (black hair) was the most frequently used term for "black." Beautiful hair was long, straight, not overly abundant, black, and glossy like lacquer. This was cultivated because the smooth, cool sensation of a woman's long hair excited a man.

Whenever she met someone, a Heian noblewoman would hide her face behind a fan. Since only her forehead was visible, it became an important clue as to her attractiveness. The hair itself simply hung down her back, so her forehead's appearance was critical. That is why she paid special attention to her hairline. Later, from the 17th to the early 20th century, hairline styles had special names, *fuji-bitai* (resembling Mt. Fuji), *karigane-bitai* (resembling flying geese), and *katō-bitai* (resem-

† Yoshio Nakamura, "What Makes a Woman Beautiful?" *The East*, Vol. II, No. 5 (1966).

bling certain temple window arches). Considerable time and effort were spent and elaborate techniques developed to beautify the forehead.

The eye was another vital part, for it gave the face its lively or vacant expression. The beauty of a gaze (*mami*) is often praised in literature, and narrow, elongated eyes were considered ideal. References to noses, however, are only to ugly ones. Apparently a beautiful nose harmonized so well with the face that it was never conspicuous. The heroine of *Ochikubo Monogatari* expresses a typical attitude when she asks, "People don't single out noses for praise, do they?"

Big noses, pug noses ("lion" noses), and slightly reddish noses were considered ugly. Geishas of later centuries used the phrase *wasurebana* (a nose easy to forget) to refer to a geisha whose nose made no particular impression, for that was the ideal nose.

The shape of the mouth was not overlooked. Since the mouth makes a face look lovely, lipstick was used to shape a small, amiable mouth that was bright red. The line between the chin and the neck was also emphasized.

The Plump Touch

The most important characteristic in the face's appeal as a whole was *aigyō*, loveliness. The term was particularly used when describing the eyes and mouth. Sei-Shōnagon, in her famous *Pillow Book* (of the Heian period), compares an unaffable, sullen face that lacks *aigyō* to pear blossoms.

Color and light and scents were important aesthetic concerns of the Heian period. Important characters in the *Genji Mono-*

gatari had names like "Shining Genji," "Princess of the Luminous Sun," "Fragrant Lord," and "Prince Scent," names which suggest that "shining," "luminous," "bright," and "fragrant" were adjectives of high praise.

Such references to "shining" are related to the Heian notion that a lustrous, finely textured white complexion with a faint red hue was the most beautiful.

A woman should also be pleasingly plump, and a special adjective, *tsubu tsubu*, was coined to refer to this fleshy quality. The *Yamato-e* and the literature of the time vividly illustrate how *tsubu tsubu* a beauty could be.

Our next concern is indicated by a passage from a Heian novel, *Yoru no Nezame*. "However beautiful a woman may be, if her heart is crooked, she will be the shame of her parents and brothers and sisters." A woman's "spiritual disposition," that is gentleness and sincerity, was considered a central element in the idea of beauty. Many novels, when introducing the heroine, describe her character and upbringing as well as her appearance. Disposition is called *kokorobae* in ancient Japanese, and that word occurs over 200 times in the *Genji Monogatari* alone. The importance of a woman's personality is suggested from the fact that usually the woman with the best character achieves happiness at the end of Heian novels.

Another point of interest is that women without skills in weaving and sewing were presented as ugly. Thus, the evaluation of a woman was based not only on her physical attractions and clothing, but also on her character, her actions, and her education. The *Ochikubo Monogatari* (mentioned above) cautions, "Particularly the woman

who is not a striking beauty should develop some skills." Though the passage is ironic in its context, it yet expresses a truth that has been recognized throughout the centuries.

Black Teeth and the Soul

Cosmetics played an important part in realizing the Heian ideal. In primitive societies, make-up had a religious meaning. Man had to have a special appearance if he were to communicate with the spirits of the *kami* (superior beings and divine spirits inhabiting nature). That seems to be the origin of some face painting and is suggested by legends, and by proper names still found in modern Japan. Later, this particular use disappeared so that today make-up is used only to enhance one's beauty.

The Heian noblewoman had special cosmetics for her special effects. She had five basic tools: oily floss silk, eyebrow paint, white powder, rouge, and teeth-blackening dye. Of the five, only the teeth-blackening dye is no longer used.

A piece of floss silk was soaked in oil and perfumed with aloe wood, clove, and other fragrant substances. Like modern hair pomade, it was applied to add luster to the hair.

Girls reaching puberty would pluck their eyebrows with hair-tweezers and paint in eyebrow lines. This custom, perhaps signifying adulthood, has been recorded as early as the 2nd century.

Northern peoples introduced a white powder, and later a lead compound and rice powder were used. By the 16th and 17th centuries, new products were intro-

duced from China's Ming dynasty, and, later, a variety of white powders were manufactured. Such white powders were used to make the face white.

Two kinds of rouge were used in Japan, lip and cheek rouge. Originally, earth with mercury-sulphide was mixed with animal fat. In the Heian period, however, safflower or bastard saffron served as the raw material.

Finally, there is the curious custom of dyeing one's teeth black. Though the origin of this custom is not certain, it seems that, like eyebrow plucking, it was part of a puberty rite.

Recent research has produced some interesting facts concerning the custom's origin. Puberty rites among certain Polynesian tribes involved tooth pulling and filing. Some of the unfiled teeth were blackened. These tribes believed that children die and then are reborn as adults. Pulling out the front teeth provided an escape for the child's spirit, and the new, adult spirit could enter the body to give it life. Blackening the teeth seems to have developed into a substitution for pulling the teeth out. Earth was mixed with extracts from leaves into a mush, or the bark of fruit trees was burned and the ashes mixed with banana juice. A black mineral was added, the paste wrapped in leaves, and then stuck between the lips and teeth overnight.

Though there are many theories about the custom's origins, I believe it originated from this Polynesian rite. Heian girls first blackened their teeth in their early teens, but this gradually shifted to a later age, to marriage, and then to the fifth month of pregnancy. Finally, black teeth meant a woman was married.

In the Muromachi period (1336-1568) teeth blackening developed into a ceremony. But by 1871, shortly before the Meiji Restoration, women agitated for an end to the practice, and two years later the empress actually stopped blackening her teeth. In rural areas, however, the custom continued for a time.

Carpenters, Warriors, and Stockings

Naturally, the ideals of feminine beauty changed during the years. For lack of material, little can be said about ancient times. We do know, however, that in the 7th century, the Nara period, long faces and slim bodies were considered beautiful. One century later, we find a screen panel with the picture of a beautiful woman under a tree decorated with feathers (in Nara's Shōsō-in). This panel, and the playful scribbling of carpenters indicate that the period's ideal beauty had fat round cheeks and a fleshy body. Derived from China, such an ideal is a remarkable example of Chinese influence on Japanese culture.

In Heian novels, beautiful women were often compared to flowers. In the *Tsutsumi Chunagon* collection of short stories, there is one chapter in which the ladies of the court are compared to flowers and judged accordingly.

By the Kamakura period, Japan was ruled by warrior families. These warriors, with realistic views of life, preferred a simple, robust form of beauty which matched their own yeoman spirits. Long slender faces again became the ideal. In paintings, they have tense, expressive features.

Later, through the Muromachi and Momoyama periods, and into the Edo period, the general populace began to gain social status. With the increased financial power of the rapidly developing merchant and artisan classes, entertainment became a major function of the cities. Now the image of the decadent woman became characteristic. The older notion of stereotyped female beauty disappeared and a new, individualistic image emerged.

A famous *bon mot* in the twentieth century is, "Women and stockings became stronger after the war." Women not only obtained equal rights, but their physique changed considerably as well. Many a young Japanese woman of today is physically quite similar to her American and European counterpart. This is the result of the Westernization of the Japanese diet, and of changes in ways of living. The Japanese woman of today tends to sit on chairs instead of kneeling on *tatami* straw mats, she tends to wear high heels rather than *geta* (wooden clogs), eat bread, meat, and butter rather than rice and bean paste.

A new term, "eight-head-body," has been coined from the many beauty contests, and the term implies that a woman's height should be eight times the length of her head. The modern ideal has become the three dimensional statuesque figure whose beauty lies in her symmetrical proportions. Under Western influence, make-up techniques and the focus points of beauty have changed remarkably.

The striking advances in world intercourse, in communications, mass media, and in international cultural relations have made it clear that Japan's position is in the world and not apart from it.

Two Ways of Life

Cultural differences are manifested in the basic institutions of societies and in specific cultural practices. As this reading illustrates, a burial custom can tell us much about marriage and the family, religion, health and welfare, and social values. When we describe a foreign custom or institution as “peculiar” or “quaint,” we tend to think that everyone perceives it likewise. Seldom do we consider the possibility that our judgment of something as “peculiar” may be, at least in part, a cultural response—a subjective response—rather than an objective evaluation.

In mid-1948 the following episode was reported by North China newspapers. A bundle containing the remains of a woman's body was found on the bank of a river which runs through the metropolitan city of Tientsin. It transpired that she was the wife of a laborer named Chang. More than ten years before, she and her husband left their North China village and went to Manchuria, where he worked as a coal miner. She died in 1946 and was buried there in a temporary grave. When the Nationalist-Communist civil war forced a shut-down of the mines, Chang decided to go back to his native village.

Not wanting to leave his wife's body in Manchuria, he dug its remains out of the tomb, packed it in a bundle, and started home with his three children, aged eleven, eight and seven. Unable to pay for train

fares all the way, they walked from Chang Chun, North Manchuria, to Mukden, South Manchuria, a distance of about two hundred miles. From there they rode for forty miles west to Hsin Min, then walked for four hundred miles to the North China coal mining center of Tong Shan, from which point they rode free in a coal train for another eighty miles to Tientsin.

Before starting to walk the last leg home, another one hundred twenty miles south, the four passed the night at the bottom of a wall near the railway station. A thief, obviously mistaking the bundle for ordinary baggage, stole it and later abandoned it. As soon as Chang discovered the bundle was missing he begged a literate person to write a number of “loss” notices for him, and these he posted in streets around the station. When someone told him that a

† Francis L. K. Hsu, *Americans and Chinese* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1953).

female body was found near the river, Chang went to the police and identified it as that of his wife. But instead of agreeing to its local burial, which the authorities required for public health reasons, Chang insisted on taking it home. When informed that the corpse was a danger to health, he retorted: "No, burial here will never do. Even if I agree, my sons will object. I carried her over a thousand miles. I used the bundle as a pillow every night, but I am still not sick!" He finally was allowed to take the body. But when the body was first discovered, the official examiners removed, for purposes of identification, a lock of hair and a tooth. Before leaving the court Chang asked that these be handed back to him, saying "she must have her body intact for burial."

That Chang was a poor and illiterate man who could not afford to pay for transportation on China's outmoded and inadequate railway system is easy for Americans to understand. They know that the Chinese are an impoverished people whose standard of living provides even the relatively prosperous with less goods, services and formal education than are available to the average American laborer. Too, Americans to whom I have related this story are impressed by the form of Chang's devotion to his deceased wife, but they still regard it as bizarre and in the last analysis unnecessary, particularly since it imperilled his children's health. Again, my American friends find it natural that Chang should have insisted on the restoration to the corpse of the tooth and the lock of hair, but they are at a loss to understand why any aspect of the burial had anything to do, as Chang declared, with his children.

It may be explained that to the Chinese, burial, with the body intact, in the village of one's nativity is part of the complete life. It is a son's obligation to see to it that this is done. Because the miner's children were not yet prepared to fulfill their filial obligation, it was the duty of the father to act for them. The difficulty of the task or the hazards to health it involved were of no matter.



This Chinese woman cleans the remains of her husband in a Cantonese cemetery and then replaces every bone in an earthen jar. This ceremony, repeated every spring, is part of the Tsing Ming Festival, a day devoted to ancestor worship.

Women of Burma

Daw Mya Sein discusses in this condensed article what she refers to as the “privileged position of women in Burma.” Among our countless images of Asia is the stereotype of the socially inferior Asian woman. In most traditional Asian societies it is true that the social status of women has been inferior to that of men. However, as the author points out, the position of women has varied from one culture to another and even from epoch to epoch within the same culture.

To people who come to Burma for the first time there are two things about the status of our women that seem to impress them with particular force. My foreign friends have often told me that they are surprised to see an ordinary Burmese woman sitting at her stall in a bazaar, dressed in the usual *htamein* and jacket, her hair arranged on top of her head in the traditional manner, often smoking a cigar—and handling her trade with all the hard-headed business acumen of a man. Or, in an agricultural family, the wife may be helping with the planting, the reaping, the winnowing. If her husband is a cartman, a Burmese woman may perform her share of the labor. You can see her in business houses, signing contracts and making decisions for the firm, or find her in any of the professions or in parliament. It all seems quite different

from the familiar picture of the down-trodden, backward Asian woman.

Yet on a social occasion you will often find that the Burmese women cluster together on one side of the room and leave their men to talk to each other in a group of their own. You will see, at a meal, that the men are served first, that their wives offer them every deference within the home. On a street there is nothing unusual in the sight of a man walking ahead while his wife follows a few paces behind carrying the bundles.

The apparent paradox of these observations is, in fact, quite an accurate indication of the rather special place that Burmese women occupy in our society. For centuries—even before recorded history, from all we can deduce—Burmese women have accepted as their right a high measure of independence. The Buddhist and the

† Daw Mya Sein, “The Women of Burma,” *Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1958).

Hindu influences that came to our country at a somewhat later date may have modified the social status of women, but we have always retained our legal and economic rights. In my own research work in the village system of Burma I have even found vestiges of a matriarchal system which must have flourished here at one time. The inheritance of certain oil wells, for instance, belonged exclusively to women; in some cases the inheritance to the headmanship of a village was through the female line. To this day we have no family surnames in Burma and a woman keeps her own name after marriage.

Our more recent history has done little to diminish our ancient rights. During the days of the Burmese kings, women were frequently appointed to high office and became leaders of a village, chieftainess, and even ruled as queen. And in a series of Burmese folk tales concerning wise and remarkable decisions in law, which have been collected by Dr. Htin Aung, the judge in each of the stories is a woman called "Princess Learned-in-the-Law." All these fields of administration, government service, law, medicine or business are always open to any Burmese woman who wishes to enter them.

In most of Asia women have had to fight for equality with men primarily on three matters: marriage, divorce, and inheritance. In Burma we have been singularly fortunate in possessing this equality even before we knew it was a problem. The "arranged marriage," customary in so large a part of Asia, is still to be found in some segments of our society, but with this essential distinction: that the parents cannot choose a partner for their daughter without offering her the right of refusal.

The marriage itself continues this principle of independence and equality. The wedding is not a religious ceremony but a civil contract—in fact no ceremony is necessary at all; a man and woman can simply make known their decision to "eat and live together."

If, by any chance, either partner of a marriage should wish to terminate their contract in divorce, this, too, is possible and acceptable under Burmese law. If there is mutual consent to the divorce, if the husband and wife both decide—for whatever reason—that they cannot live together, they simply announce the end of the marriage to the headman of the village or to the heads of the two families. But even without this amicable arrangement, a woman can divorce her husband for cruelty, serious misconduct, or desertion, regardless of his consent. If she leaves him for a year and takes no maintenance from him during that time, he can claim a divorce. A man, on the other hand, must leave his wife for three years before she can get an automatic divorce. The reason for this difference of time is, of course, that business or professional duties are more likely to keep a man away from his family for long periods, but Burmese women often joke about how this just shows that a woman can make up her mind two years faster than a man.

As in many parts of Asia, polygamy is accepted by Burmese society—but with one important difference. A man cannot marry for a second time without the consent of his first wife, and he must abide by her decision because otherwise she can sue for divorce and a partition of the property. Polygamy is not practiced very much nowadays, especially among edu-

cated people, but I remember hearing about the days of my great-grandparents and how government officials who were sent on a tour of duty to the provinces would keep one wife up-country and one in town.

In Asia a woman's right of inheritance has, perhaps, occasioned more acrimonious argument and fiercer resistance than any other single aspect of women's status. Political rights and franchise have come to Asian women comparatively easily—with less opposition, in fact, than Western women found—but the question of equality in inheritance is still hotly debated in many parts of Asia. Here too, Burmese women find that their traditional law recognizes them equally with men, and all through our history we have had full inheritance rights. These rights are ensured by the rather odd fact that under Burmese Buddhist Law neither a man nor a woman can write a will. All property must be handed on according to the laws of succession. This means that during a marriage a husband and wife are joint owners of all property acquired during their marriage. If the man dies first, the woman automatically inherits—and, besides, she becomes the head of the family with full authority. In the same way, if a woman dies first, the man inherits. If he has more than one wife, there are laws laid down to deal with the complications of inheritance that this situation might raise, laws, that is, which decide which part of the property was accrued before marriage, which part during the marriage, and how it should be divided. Only when both the parents die do the children divide the property among themselves, and then, too, sons and daughters inherit equal shares.

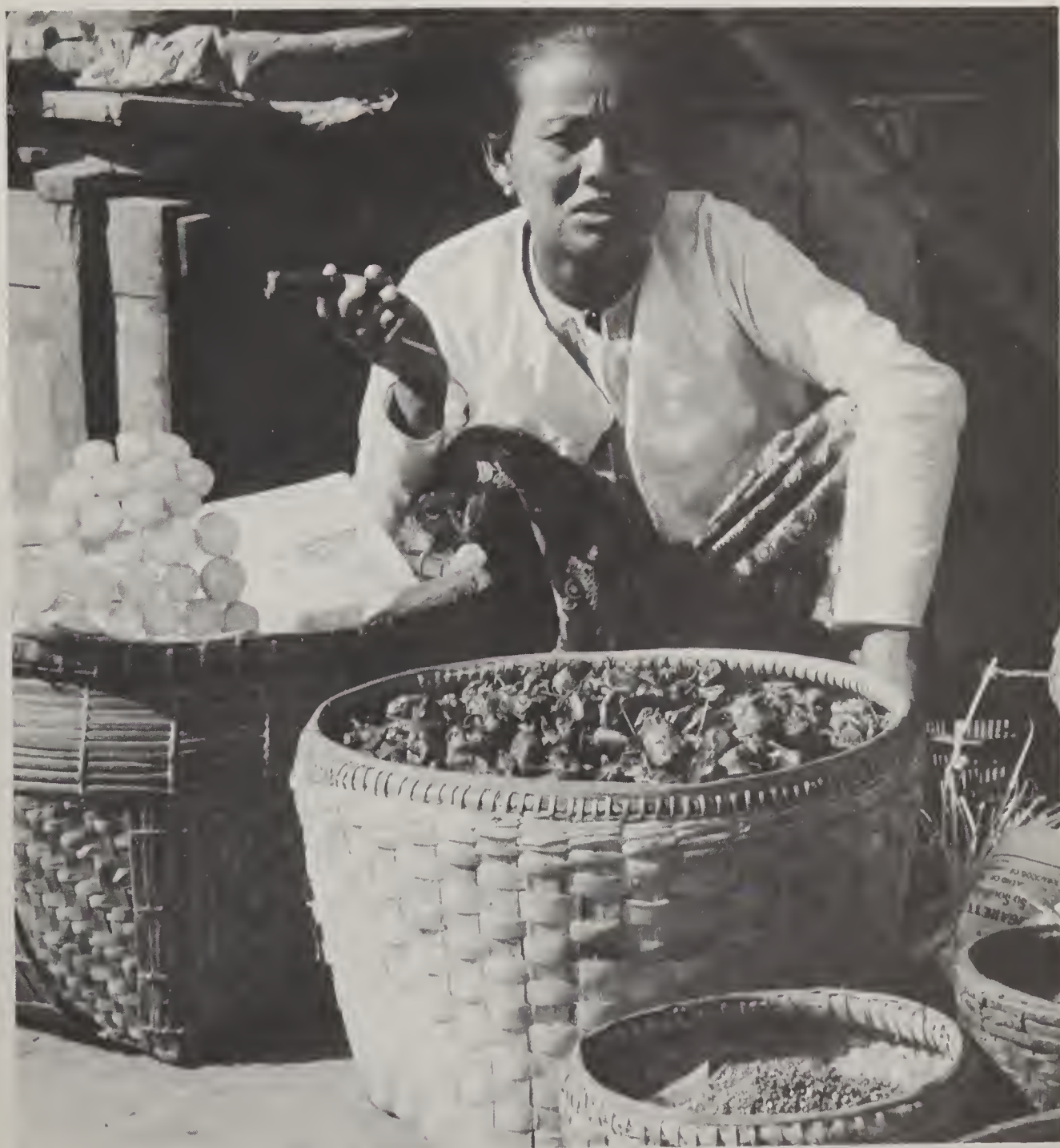
With this background of history and custom in Burma, it is not really surprising that Burmese women have accepted their place in public life as a natural part of their status in society. On landed estates in the past it often happened that a woman, after she had been left a widow, more than doubled or trebled the family property through her own efforts. Before the war, businesses were mostly in the hands of foreigners, but in postwar Burma, as business opportunities arose for Burmese, the women as well as the men took advantage of them. The idea of big businesses, of import-export firms, of offices or shops being run by women (which so surprises the foreigner) seems perfectly ordinary to the Burmese.

In politics we have never had much of a feminist movement because in our society the problem of equal rights had never arisen. However, under British rule Burma was considered part of India and we were governed according to the same constitution. In 1927, therefore, we did have a little bit of a feminist movement to abolish the clause which provided that women could not stand for election to the Legislative Council. In 1929 a woman was elected for the first time to the Legislature. Since then we have had no trouble, and at the present moment we have six women members in parliament.

With this degree of freedom and equality in our public life, how does it happen that Burmese women seem, within the family, to accept a subservient position? In this I think, perhaps, that appearances are rather deceptive to the foreigner. In Burmese society we have never had the kind of parties and entertainments that are usual in the West. We have, of course,

our own amusements—a *shinpyu* ceremony or a big wedding party or something like that—at which we meet. In the cities, especially Rangoon, where “Western-style parties” are beginning to be part of our

life, we are apt to carry over our own social habits. The men will sit together and the women will sit together because it is assumed that they have more to say to one another. At a big dinner party or an



A woman of Upper Burma smokes a cheroot as she hawks her produce in the village marketplace. Traditionally, women in Burma have had more freedom to engage in activities outside the home than most Asian women.

informal picnic, it is quite customary to feed the men first because we know that on the whole they are the busy ones who may have an appointment or work that they must fulfill. We take this still further—even if a woman has a job or a profession, when her husband is transferred to another place or post, she will leave her work and start again in the place where he is assigned. We like to give precedence to our men in our own homes because we acknowledge them, until their death, as head of the household. Possibly we can afford to offer them this courtesy because we are secure in our rights and status. But part of the deference we offer them stems from the influence of Buddhism in our country. We believe that when a new Buddha comes to the world it will be as a man (though, to be sure, one of us who is now a woman may, in a later life, be born as a man and eventually progress to Buddhahood). We feel that this gives men an inherent superiority: mentally, they can reach higher than women.

However, much of what appears to be a retiring attitude among Burmese women in their social life is actually explained by the difference of Burmese manners from Western manners. In the West the tradition of chivalry (in however diluted a form) dictates many of the surface attitudes to women. We have no such tradition in Burma, but I don't think that our women feel inferior as a result. They have considerable authority in the home—they usually handle the family finances, for instance—and in many ways more freedom than Western women. Because of our family system, there are nearly always cousins or sisters or aunts or other relatives who live in the household. This means that

there is always someone in the family to take care of the children and the mother is free to have a job or profession outside the home. The children, meanwhile, are taught at an early age to help in the house and in their mother's work outside. You will, for example, often find a girl of seven or eight sitting with her mother in a shop, learning how to sell the goods or helping out during a busy time.

As the girls grow older, it may seem to a Westerner that they lead a rather restricted life. It is not customary among us for a girl to go out alone after she is sixteen or seventeen. She will go out with her aunt or her mother, or she may go to the pictures with her friends, but there will be no question of "dating" in the Western sense. In the universities the boys may pay calls on the girls in their dormitory, or a group of them may go for a walk together, but even this is considered a Western institution. However, in our own terms, a Burmese girl has a good deal of freedom before marriage and we have no form of purdah for our women. Naturally there would not be the high percentage of love marriages that we have in this country if the boys and girls had no opportunity to meet and get to know each other.

Altogether, in our social life as well as in our public life, we feel that we, as Burmese women, occupy a privileged and independent position. It is a position for which we are trained—almost imperceptibly, and with love and security—from childhood. It is a position which is not limited either by marriage or by motherhood, and which allows us, eventually, to fit ourselves into the life, the work, and all the rewards that our country has to offer equally with our men.



The Meaning of Buddhism

In this reading, the author, U Thittila, touches upon many key aspects of the teachings of Buddha. The two main branches of Buddhism are the Mahayana and the Theravada. Theravada is the form that developed in South Asia and is the state religion of Burma. It is thought by many to be closest to the teachings of Gautama Buddha. Theravada is generally unconcerned with gods, heavens, and hells, but focuses on the development of the individual who possesses perfect wisdom. While reading this selection, keep in mind the characteristics that we associate with religions in the West. Compare these characteristics with those of Buddhism as they are described by the author.

All the teachings of the Buddha can be summed up in one word: Dhamma. It means truth, that which really is. It also means law, the law which exists in a man's own heart and mind. It is the principle of righteousness. Therefore the Buddha appeals to man to be noble, pure, and charitable not in order to please any Supreme Deity, but in order to be true to the highest in himself. Dhamma, this law of righteousness, exists not only in a man's heart and mind, it exists in the universe also. All the universe is an embodiment and revelation of Dhamma. When the moon rises and sets, the rains come, the crops grow, the seasons change, it is because of Dhamma, for Dhamma is the law of the universe which makes matter act

in the ways revealed by our studies of natural science. If a man will live by Dhamma, he will escape misery and come to Nirvana, the final release from all suffering. It is not by any kind of prayer, nor by any ceremonies, nor by any appeal to a God, that a man will discover the Dhamma which will lead him to his goal. He will discover it in only one way—by developing his own character. This development comes only through control of the mind and purification of the emotions. Until a man stills the storm in his heart, until he extends his loving-kindness to all beings, he will not be able to take even the first step toward his goal.

Thus Buddhism is not a religion at all, in the sense in which the word is commonly

† Bhikkhu U Thittila, *The Path of the Buddha: Buddhism Interpreted by Buddhists*, ed. by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956).

understood. It is not a system of faith or worship. In Buddhism, there is no such thing as belief in a body of dogma which must be taken on faith, such as belief in a Supreme Being, a creator of the universe, the reality of an immortal soul, a personal savior, or archangels who are supposed to carry out the will of the Supreme Deity. Buddhism begins as a search for truth.

The truth which the Buddhist sees when he looks around him is the truth of cause and effect. Every action, no matter how insignificant, produces an effect; every effect in its turn becomes a cause and produces still further effects. It is meaningless to inquire for a First Cause. A First Cause is inconceivable; rather, cause and effect are cyclical, and this universe when it dies and falls apart will give rise to another universe, just as this one was formed from the dispersed matter of a previous universe. The origin of the universe, like that of every individual person or thing in it, is dependent on the chain of previous causes, which goes on and on in an endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth. This is the principle of dependent origination.

What of the soul? The Buddha taught that there is no soul or self, and he used the metaphor of the cart. If you take away the wheels and axles, the floorboards and sides, the shafts, and all the other parts of the cart, what remains? Nothing but the conception of a cart, which will be the same when a new cart is built. So the uninterrupted process of psychophysical phenomena moves from life to life. Each life passes instantaneously in death to a new life, and the new life is the effect of the causes in the old life. A candle flame at this instant is different from the flame that burned an instant ago, yet the flame is continuous.

Thus in the chain of interdependent causation all phenomenal existence is constantly changing. The elements combine and recombine with no underlying substance, or soul, to give them permanence. This is the Wheel of Life. The main cause of the restlessness, the suffering, which is the lot of beings turning on the Wheel of Life, is craving or selfish desire for existence, and it is this desire which sets the life force in motion. Desire is manifested in action. This action is in reality volition or will power, which is responsible for the creation of being. It is called karma in Sanskrit, but in the Pali language, which the Buddha spoke and in which all the Buddhist scriptures were written, it is softened to kamma.

In this universe in which nothing is permanent all change is governed by kamma or the kammic force. Kamma means action. In its general sense, kamma means all good and bad actions. Kamma refers to all kinds of intentional actions whether mental, verbal, or physical, that is, all thoughts, words, and deeds. In its ultimate sense Kamma means all moral and immoral volition.

Kamma, though it activates the chain of cause and effect, is not determinism, nor is it an excuse for fatalism. The past influences the present, but does not dominate it. The past is the background against which life goes on from moment to moment; the past and the present influence the future. Only the present moment exists, and the responsibility for using the present moment for good or ill lies with each individual. Every action produces an effect; it is cause first and effect afterward. We therefore speak of kamma as "the law of cause and effect."

In the world around us there are many inequalities in the lot of man—some are rich, others are poor, some live full lives, others die young, etc. According to Buddhism, the inequalities which exist are due, to some extent, to environment—which is itself shaped by cause and effect—and to a greater extent to causes, that is kamma, which are in the present, the immediate past, and the remote past. Man himself is responsible for his own happiness and misery. Thus kamma is not fate nor destiny nor blind determinism. Man has a certain amount of free will; he can modify his actions and affect his future. Each act, whether mental or physical, tends to produce its like. If a man does a good deed or thinks a good thought, the effect upon him is to increase the tendencies to goodness in him.

The understanding of kamma gives us power. The more we make the doctrine of kamma a part of our lives, the more power we gain, not only to direct our future, but also to help our fellow beings more effectively. The practice of good kamma, when fully developed, will enable us to overcome evil and even to overcome kamma itself, thus bringing us to our goal, Nirvana.

The principle of dependent origination and the law of kamma provide the background for understanding the nature of rebirth. According to Buddhism, death is “the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon.” It is not the complete annihilation of the being, for although the organic life has ceased, the kammic force which hitherto actuated it is not destroyed. Our physical forms are only the outward manifestations of the invisible kammic force. When the present form perishes, another

form takes its place according to a good or bad volitional impulse—the kamma that was the most powerful—at the moment before death.

At death the kammic force remains entirely undisturbed by the disintegration of the physical body, and the passing away of the present consciousness creates the conditions for the coming into being of a fresh body in another birth.

The true Buddhist regards death as a momentary incident between one life and its successor and views its approach with calmness. His only concern is that his future should be such that the condition of that life may provide him with better opportunities for perfecting himself.

Buddhism teaches that with the practice of meditation and concentration the memory can be trained. By meditation and mind culture one can acquire the power to see one's rebirth as a link, or a succession of links, in a chain of births; one can also acquire the power of looking back into one's previous lives. Not only this, but Buddhism also teaches that with the attainment of Nirvana in this life itself, through enlightenment and true wisdom, one can reach the end of this chain of rebirths.

Nirvana, the state to which all Buddhists aspire, is the cessation of desire and hence the end of suffering. Nirvana in Sanskrit means “the blowing out.” It is understood as the extinguishment of the flame of personal desire, the quenching of the fire of life. Among Westerners Nirvana is often thought of as a negative state, a kind of “nothingness.” But in the Buddhist scriptures it is always described in positive terms; the highest refuge, safety, emancipation, peace, and the like. Nirvana is freedom, but not freedom from circum-

stance; it is freedom from the bonds with which we have bound ourselves to circumstance. That man is free who is strong enough to say, "Whatever comes I accept as best."

Nirvana is the dying of the kammic force. The Buddhist ascends to Nirvana through many stages of the Middle Way, the path of wisdom, morality, and control. There is not space enough here even to mention these phases or the various aspects of the regimen recommended by the Buddha in his vast scriptures; but it may be taken for granted that the life of the conscientious Buddhist is full and rich. Through the cycle of rebirths he ascends, he perfects himself, he conquers his cravings through wisdom and love. Slowly the kammic force ebbs away, the flame dies down.

At the root of man's trouble is his primal state of ignorance. From ignorance comes desire, which sets the kammic force in motion. Hence the way to Nirvana lies through knowledge, and we come again full circle to Dhamma, the Buddha's teachings. For in Dhamma, as truth, lies release from ignorance and desire and perpetual change, and the Buddha has shown us the way to truth.

What, then, is the meaning of Buddhism? Ultimately Buddhism, although not strictly speaking a religion, is a systematic exercise in spirituality, certainly one of the greatest ever conceived. It offers the individual a means by which he may fulfill himself through understanding, reaching eventually the plane of the supraperson on which both the self and self-knowledge are no longer useful.

What does Buddhism mean for the ordinary person going about his work in the

world? All through the Buddha's teaching, repeated stress is laid on self-reliance and resolution. Buddhism makes man stand on his own feet, it arouses his self-confidence and energy. The Buddha again and again reminded his followers that there is no one, either in heaven or on earth, who can help them or free them from the results of their past evil deeds. The Buddhist knows that the powers of his own mind and spirit are enough to guide him in the present and shape his future and bring him eventually to the truth. He knows that he possesses a strength which is ultimately unsurpassable.

Moreover, Buddhism points unequivocally to the moral aspect of everyday life. Though Nirvana is amoral, in the sense that final peace transcends the conflict of good and evil, the path to wisdom is definitely a moral path. This follows logically from the doctrine of kamma. Every action must produce an effect, and one's own actions produce an effect in one's own life.

This doctrine finds its highest expression in *metta*, the Buddhist goal of universal and all-embracing love. *Metta* means much more than brotherly feeling or kind-heartedness, though these are part of it. It is active benevolence, a love which is expressed and fulfilled in active ministry for the uplifting of fellow beings. *Metta* goes hand in hand with helpfulness and a willingness to forego self-interest in order to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind. It is *metta* which in Buddhism is the basis for social progress. *Metta* is, finally, the broadest and intensest conceivable degree of sympathy, expressed in the throes of suffering and change.

Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism

Originating in India, Buddhism spread throughout much of Asia. Wherever Buddhism went, it mixed with pre-existing religious beliefs and practices, resulting in Buddhism's diverse forms. In many regions Buddhism combined with older animistic beliefs. This condensed article deals primarily with the admixture of Buddhism and animism in Burma.

When the great King Anawrahta of Pagan united the whole of Burma into a single kingdom in the eleventh century and made Theravada Buddhism the national religion, there were already in existence a number of primitive religious cults, the most important and the most popular of which were the worship of "Nat" spirits, astrology, and alchemy. In addition, there were also Mahayana Buddhism and Tantric (or magical) Buddhism, but debased and distorted, and bearing strange fruit from the fertile soil of native cults of magic and sorcery. All the different cults were given an artificial unity by the fact that they were all under the patronage of the Ari monks. These Ari monks had some acquaintance with the Buddhist scriptures, gloried in the name of the Buddha, and wore dark brown robes and conical hats. But they also presided over the Nat spirit festivals, at which hundreds of animals were sacrificed.

Astrology to the Burmese meant not

only the methods of tracing the courses of the planets and their influence on mortals, but also the ritual by which the planets were appeased and made to withdraw their baneful influence. In other words, it involved a worship of the planets. As Burmese astrology had its origins in Hindu astrology, the worship of the planets also involved worship of at least some of the Hindu gods.

Alchemy also came to Burma from India, but Burmese alchemy became a religious cult. The Burmese alchemist did not merely seek the power to transmute base metals into gold, but had the noble aim of evolving an eternally youthful body, which would be an answer to the perpetual human lament that beauty and youth must pass.

The worship of Nats was purely native in origin, and developed out of that form of animism which still prevails among some of the hill peoples of the country. The term "Nat" originally meant a "lord," and in-

† U Htin Aung, "Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism," *Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1958).

volved an idea similar to feudal overlordship. A Nat was a spirit who had some dominion over a group of people or over a certain object or objects. The spirit who had dominion over a small withered tree was as much a Nat as the spirit who had dominion over a particular village or district. The suzerainty of a Nat was both territorial and personal. The Nat guardian of a village had power over all those who were born in the village or born of a village family, wherever they might be, and he also had power over all who came to his village, during the time they remained there. He would inflict no harm, nay, he would even give his protection, to those who recognized his suzerainty, and such recognition could be expressed by an offering of rice or fruit, or by a few words of supplication, or a gesture of homage.

At first the Nats that were worshiped were impersonal and local, as for example, the Nats of the banyan tree, the hill, and the lake which were just outside the village, and the guardian Nat of the village. Later on, thirty-six personal and national Nats came into being, who were distinct personages with their own life histories, and who were worshiped all over the country. They did not replace the local Nats, but diminished their importance.

The most important of the thirty-six were the Lord of the Great Mountain, and his sister Lady Golden-Face, whose abode was on Mount Popa, an extinct volcano in central Burma. They became, in the ninth century, the guardian gods of the city of Pagan and its kings. There was an annual Nat feast on Mount Popa itself, at which hundreds of animals were offered as sacrifice to the Lord of the Great Mountain and Lady Golden-Face. People came from

afar to take part in the feast, to get drunk with ecstasy and toddy wine, and to dance with abandon, believing themselves to have become possessed by the Nats. There were spirit mediums in attendance at the Nat shrines, who provided the wild music and led the wilder dances. The Popa feast was held on a full moon day in December, and on other full moon days there were also feasts connected with other pre-Buddhist cults.

When Anawrahta made Theravada Buddhism the national religion of the country, opposition came naturally from the Aris, and because they exercised great influence over the people, the king had no choice but to resort to religious persecution. The Ari monks were unfrocked, and made to serve in the royal armies. All the images of the gods of the planets and the Hindu gods were seized and placed in a Vishnu temple, which was renamed "The Prison of the Gods." All the pre-Buddhist cults were suppressed. Spirit mediums left the shrines to become strolling musicians, dancers, and actors.

But the people found it difficult to discard at once old beliefs and old practices, and resorted to stratagem. The followers of the cult of alchemy modified their conception of an eternally youthful body to that of a body remaining youthful for thousands of years, in order to conform to the Buddhist doctrine that nothing is permanent, and justified their search for the elixir of youth by saying that they wanted to live until the coming of the next Buddha so that they could listen to his preaching. The followers of the cult of astrology threw a veneer of Buddhism over their ritual and ceremony, as for example in the case of the ceremony of the Nine

Gods, where the gods of the nine planets gave way to Buddha and his eight disciples.

As for Nat worship, the people, in spite of the king's edicts, went on worshipping the Nats, and Anawrahta finally decided to bring them over into Buddhism. The figures of the thirty-six lords were taken from their shrines, and placed in the king's great pagoda, in an attitude of worship, and he declared that the number was now thirty-seven, because Sakra, the king of the gods and guardian of Buddhism, was at the head of the pantheon. The cult of Thirty-Six Lords therefore became the cult of the Thirty-Seven Lords, and Anawrahta replaced some of the earlier lords with the Nat spirits of some of his dead heroes.

All this was possible, because the Burmese concept of the Nat was a very comprehensive one and took in under its wing Hindu gods as well as Buddhist figures. As the Nats themselves were now shown to be worshipers of the Buddha, it was deemed

proper for Buddhists to worship the Nats. The feasts of the full moon became festivals of the full moon on being given a coating of Buddhism, just as pre-Christian feasts of spring and midwinter in Europe became the great Christian festivals of Easter and Christmas.

With the passing of time, people came to forget the pre-Buddhist and primitive origins of their folk beliefs in alchemy, astrology, and Nats, and learned to accept them as part of their Buddhism, just as they thought that the pre-Buddhist belief in the transmigration of souls was a doctrine of Theravada Buddhism. Thus, at the present day, many (and in rural and primitive areas the majority) of Burmese still consult their astrologer and make their offerings to the Nats, without ceasing to be good Buddhists. At certain times of year dances are still held through which the dancers try to become possessed by the Nat spirits, and a few Burmese still even make alchemic experiments.



A long time ago Buddhist missionaries from India and Ceylon carried the Buddhist faith to Burma, where most people are now Buddhist. This Burmese family is praying inside the famous Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon.

The Chinese Way in Religion

This reading is made up of three selections by Francis L. K. Hsu, a professor of anthropology at Northwestern University. In the first selection the author discusses the relationship between men and their gods and shows how these are paralleled in political and social institutions. Dr. Hsu describes in the second selection what he refers to as “the universal religion of China”: ancestor worship. Central to this religion is the interaction between the living and the dead. The family has continuity and therefore transcends the life spans of its individual members. In the third selection, Dr. Hsu discusses the concept of god as one of the features that distinguish Western religions from the religions of East and South Asia.

The World of Spirits

The author depicts here the interaction between the world of spirits and the world of men in Chinese religion.

To appreciate the profound manner in which religious differences reflect the life of the two peoples let us first take a close look at the Chinese way in religion. The Chinese world of the spirits is essentially like their world of men. In each the mass of common men are governed by a hierarchy of officials. This hierarchy in the Chinese spirit world consists of three inter-

related domains: the Domain of Judgment, the Western Paradise and the court of the Supreme Ruler of Heaven.

In the Domain of Judgment are found the courts of the ten judges who keep complete records on the merits and demerits of all human beings. The souls of all dead are reviewed by each judge successively. Those who committed evil deeds, such as licentiousness or unfilial behavior, in the world of humans are subject to all manner of punishment and those who were blameless or meritorious, the dutiful and the charitable, are given a variety of rewards.

† Francis L. K. Hsu, *Americans and Chinese* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1953).

The Western Paradise is a land of eternal happiness, thought by some to be under the headship of Buddha and by others to be under the Goddess Mother Wang. The Chinese are quite vague about this domain. Some observers say that belief in this paradise arose out of the geographical relationship between India, Buddhism's place of origin, and China, where Buddhism was introduced around 100 A.D., some 600 years after the death of Buddha. Whatever the case, the Chinese do not seem to doubt that it is a desirable place for the soul of the dead. In a funeral procession anywhere in China there will be found "condolence banners." Upon these blue or white pieces of satin, held aloft by hired hands, are inscribed sentiments to the effect that the deceased has gone to the Western Paradise on the back of a stork. In North China, the farewell rite to the dead, which takes place the day before the funeral, is always performed with the participants facing toward the west. References to the Western Paradise also are common in scriptures recited by priests during those public prayer meetings when the Goddess Mother Wang or Buddha is petitioned to bless the believers.

The Supreme Ruler of Heaven has jurisdiction over all men and all gods. But he was not omnipresent. In this regard he differs fundamentally from the Christian God. To govern both gods and men, the Supreme Ruler depends upon a large number of functionaries who have titles and ranks not unlike those of officials under the emperor. He is assisted not only by court ministers, commanders-in-chief, district gods and earth gods, judges and armed forces, but his lieutenants also include the kitchen god, who watches over every household, and roving inspectors,

who travel from area to area. His orders are executed through these numerous functionaries, and he metes out reward or punishment through the ten judges in the Domain of Judgment.

It is not solely the structure of the Chinese world of the spirits that is similar to the world of men. The presumed attitudes of the gods toward men and the actual attitudes of men toward their gods are equally reflective of the relationship between Chinese dynastic rulers and their subjects. As in their dealings with worldly officialdom, the Chinese respect their gods, but they keep their distance from them—they feel neither identification with them nor emotional attachment to them.

The Supreme Ruler of Heaven and his lieutenants are believed to be wise, just and firm. They need food and clothing, and express their pleasure or anger just like their earthly counterparts, the emperor and his bureaucracy. It is not enough for the common folks, who are their subjects, to provide for them by ritual offerings, the people must seek the gods' pleasure. In these propitiations the people exercise a variety of techniques. For gods, like officials, are not infallible. If it is possible to bribe them, they are bribed.

If the firmness of gods can be softened by pleading, the Chinese deities regularly have their ears full. Disasters such as epidemics, drought, and earthquakes are thought to be indications of the gods' wrath or the work of evil spirits. In either case, only the Supreme Ruler of Heaven and his lieutenants can adjust the matter, and they are petitioned to do so when these calamities strike. The typical Chinese petition to the gods is like the typical Chinese petition to the emperor and his officials.

The gods are infinitely praised and exalted while the petitioners deprecate and demean themselves without reserve. Such gestures are designed to placate the angry gods or to have them intervene with the evil spirits in the petitioners' behalf.

Then, too, the deities may be cultivated by having their "birthdays" celebrated in luxury and pomp. Such celebrations are universal in China, and the festivities honor Buddha, the Dragon God, the God of Agriculture, the God of Wealth, the Goddess of Mercy, and many others.

Yet in spite of their desire to obtain the gods' favors, the Chinese do not seek too close an association with them. In the normal course of events, gods are located in the temples or in special shrines. The closest the Chinese come to "living" with gods and spirits is in respect to the household altars. But this is no more than a physical proximity, for the worshipper pays homage at appointed times before such an altar, and as soon as he leaves it the gods are left behind. Usually those who have gods hovering about them are mediums or those nearing disaster or death.

This lack of intimacy with the supernatural has two important correlates: divination and polytheism. As for the first, having no sense of personal contact with the beyond, the Chinese resort to fortune telling or divination. I do not know of a single Chinese city or town which is without diviners or geomancy readers, physiognomists, phrenologists, mediums, and all kinds of fortune tellers. For a fee, these persons offer to foretell the length of a person's life and his business prospects, or to determine the matchability of a boy and girl and the ritual suitability of a new house site or graveyard. Too, they often under-

take to arrange a meeting or communication with the gods or one's ancestors. There is literally no question they do not attempt to answer and almost no matter relating to the gods which they refuse to interpret. It is safe to say that no individual of prominence in traditional China failed to have his fate told, not once but many times by different professional fortune tellers. One fortune teller even became the prime minister during the reign of an emperor in the Ming dynasty for no other reason than that his forecast happened to please the ruler.

The 1911 Revolution had little or no effect upon these practices, and the majority of the people as well as the warlords and many important persons in the Nationalist government regularly patronized diviners of one kind or another.

In order to establish their "accuracy," these fortune tellers are not at all reluctant to provide the public with a sample of their wares. As "proof" of their ability, it has long been customary to display in their show windows their predictions of things to come in the lives of prominent persons. During the 'thirties, a pedestrian on the thoroughfares of Shanghai could see in the windows of fortune tellers' shops various interpretations of Chiang Kai-shek's future.

The second correlate of the lack of intimacy between the worshipper and the supernatural is the polytheistic nature of Chinese religion. It is difficult to determine which is the cause. That is, given a multiplicity of gods, an intimate relationship with them is impossible; but the absence of a sense of intimacy in turn contributes to the multiplication of gods. At any rate, when there are many gods the worshipper's religious emotions are necessarily divided. Being divided, the intensity of these emo-

tions is reduced, and the worshipper is not likely to feel an overpowering attachment to any particular deity.

Consequently in every Chinese village we find a variety of temples, but instead of each particular temple being dedicated to a specific god, all are dedicated to the worship of many different gods. The inventory of gods in a city temple is much larger. No one knows how many gods there are in China. There seems to be no limit to them.

Implicit in the foregoing discussion is a recognition of the fact that there is no clear demarcation line between the Chinese world of the spirits and that of men. Naturally, the Chinese distinguish between life and death. They also speak of the difference between the workings of men and what is the work of gods. But in the last analysis these distinctions become inseparably blurred in consequence of the Chinese view that inhabitants of one world frequently and as a matter of course affect those of the other.

Ancestor Worship

In the following selection, Dr. Hsu explains the concept of ancestor worship in Chinese religion. Ancestors are believed to be concerned about the continuing fortunes of the family, and reciprocal concern for ancestors is demonstrated by the surviving family.

Chinese ancestor worship should not be confused with what many Westerners sometimes slightly refer to as ancestor worship among their Occidental fellows. This Western usage has reference to those who, because of great pride in their pedigree, spare no effort or money to trace

their genealogy back to some early well-known patriot or noble. These persons often add middle names such as Vanderbilt, Astor or duPont, which correspond to those of the famous ancestor, or grace their own heirs with such honorifics. Or instead of selecting new Christian names for their offspring, they prefer to insure the continuity of the family name in full by calling the male descendants Stuyvesant Peabody IV or John R. Rutledge III. As for the women, they join the Daughters of the American Revolution or the Daughters of the Confederacy. Although these usages, so common in English and American life, superficially embody some sentiments similar to those found in Chinese ancestor worship, nevertheless they are principally a token of status not unlike other symbols of social position.

But Chinese ancestor worship is of an entirely different order from such limited Western practices. I know of no Chinese, save the relatively few Christians and Mohammedans, who do not adhere to this cult. It is literally the universal religion of China. More, it is the central link between the Chinese world of men and their world of the spirits. Ancestor worship not only specifically embodies all the general characteristics of the Chinese approach to the supernatural but to the Chinese mind is itself positive proof and reinforcement of all other religious beliefs that they hold. It gives meaning and direction to all religious forms and doctrines and it is an active ingredient in every aspect of Chinese society, from the family to the government, from local business to the national economy.

There are at least three basic assumptions of Chinese ancestor worship that we

may distinguish. First, all living persons owe their fortunes or misfortunes to their ancestors. A man may be a beggar because of his laziness, and this fact may be known to everyone in the community, but if his ancestors had accumulated enough good deeds while they were alive, they probably never would have had such a lazy descendant. A great official may attain prominence by excellence of scholarship and strength of character, and everyone who knows him may testify to these virtues. But his very achievement is *de facto* evidence of his ancestors' high moral worth. Therefore, since the remotest times, the Chinese have said that their individual successes derived from the shadow of their ancestors and that their individual successes, in turn, shone upon their ancestors.

The second assumption of ancestor worship is that all departed ancestors, like other gods and spirits, have needs that are not different from those of the living. To prevent one's ancestors from degenerating into spiritual vagabonds, it is the duty of every man to provide for his departed ancestors just as he provides for his parents while they are alive. Accordingly, the dead, to the limit of the male descendants' financial ability, must be offered food and life-sized paper models of clothing, furniture, sedan chairs, horses, donkeys, cows, and servants, so that the departed may set up house in the other world. In the 1930's I saw paper rickshas and automobiles added to the age-old variety of offerings.

This concept explains why a Chinese man or a woman who dies without male heirs is an object of public pity. For they are doomed to an existence as spirit tramps, depending entirely upon handouts from charitable families or consuming the left-

overs of better situated spirits who have had their fill. The presence in the other world of these spirit tramps usually causes those making offerings to their own ancestors on such occasions as the Ancestral Festival to make also a duplicate offering at public cross-roads, so that their own ancestors may enjoy theirs in peace.

The third assumption is that the departed ancestors continue, as in life, to assist their relatives in this world just as their living descendants can also lend a hand to them. That is, a person's present lot may be improved by the spiritual efforts of departed ancestors, and the spiritual welfare or misery of a departed ancestor may likewise be enhanced or mitigated by the worldly actions of living descendants. The strength of this belief in a continuing "social tie" is attested to by many popular tales.

Here is one that is typical of those which show how the dead help the living. An imperial examiner was in his studio reading the examination papers of candidates for the bureaucracy. As he reviewed them he put the papers in two piles—those which he marked "consider again" and those which he decided to "flunk outright." Beginning his perusal of the "consider again" pile, he picked up one which he was sure he had already discarded into the other. He discarded it once more. But a few moments later he came upon it in the "consider again" stack. Just when the annoyed examiner was about to discard it for the third time, a spirit appeared before him. They conversed, and the spirit convinced him that this particular paper, written by one of the spirit's great grandchildren, deserved to be reconsidered. The examiner reconsidered the paper and he

passed the candidate. The burden of this tale was not that the examiner was forced to confer this imperial honor upon some one who was undeserving. To the contrary, the story made it clear that the spirit merely pointed out certain of the paper's qualities that the examiner had overlooked.

More numerous than stories such as the preceding are those depicting how ancestral spirits are assisted by their descendants. One of the most famous is entitled, "Mu Lien Rescues His Mother." Mu Lien's mother was neither dutiful nor pious toward the gods. Even worse, she blasphemed the spirits and reviled monks and priests. She ate meat on days when she was supposed to consume only fruits and vegetables. After death, following the infliction of every torture in the ten judges' courts, her soul lingered in one of the many hells. In the meantime her son became a monk and attained great spiritual power. Hearing that his mother was in trouble, he went to her rescue. After a search throughout the world of the spirits he found her soul and eventually obtained its release from further torture.

Evidence of this belief in interaction between the living and the dead is not confined to folklore. In all of the towns and villages where I have visited or engaged in research, in order to increase the spiritual welfare of the dead it is the duty of the living to hire priests, monks and nuns to perform elaborate services and scripture recitations. Throughout the same communities, many men and women patronized mediums and attended seances to determine the situation and specific needs of recently departed relatives. Behind these investigations lay not mere inquisitiveness or an uncomplicated wish to com-

mune with the deceased. They wished to know about their departed ones' spiritual condition for the purpose of taking action in the event it proved to be unsatisfactory.

Polytheism Versus Monotheism

The fundamental teaching of Judaism and Christianity is that there is but one God. Many of the religions indigenous to South and East Asia hold that there is a plurality of gods. In the following selection, Dr. Hsu discusses some of the political, social, and psychological implications of such differences.

Although studies in comparative religion have produced many classifications systems in which to pigeon-hole the religions of the world, the most basic and meaningful division would appear to be that between monotheism and polytheism. Christianity, Judaism and Mohammedanism are monotheistic religions, while all other religions of the world are polytheistic. It is in this basic contrast that the profound differences between the Chinese and American approaches to the supernatural have their beginning.

In a society where relationships tend to be exclusive rather than inclusive, where an attitude of "all or nothing" pervades every aspect of life, the worshipper finds in monotheism a religious doctrine compatible with secular life.

Christianity and Judaism, the two monotheistic religions which are the most popular in the West, are essentially religions of the individual. They emphasize a direct link between the one and only God and the individual human soul. The more fervent is the worshipper's belief in individual

self-reliance, the stronger is his faith that there is only one omnipresent, omnipotent and even omniscient (as in the tenets of the Christian Scientist's faith) God. This being the case, by definition all other gods are false and evil idols to be eliminated at whatever cost.

On the other hand, in a society where human relationships are inclusive rather than exclusive, and which are shared rather than monopolized, the worshipper finds polytheism to his liking. This religious outlook encourages not only a belief in many gods, but it emphasizes the co-existence of all supernatural beings. Taoism, Buddhism and ancestor worship are essentially religions of the group. At the extreme, one (Buddhism) goes so far as to preach the negation of the individual. But the usual aim of the believer is to establish a satisfactory relationship with all spiritual forces, and the open and avowed reason is the achievement of specific human ends. Thus as man's activities extend and his purposes multiply, his gods become more numerous. In the minds of Chinese believers there is therefore no question of which gods are true and which false, and for this reason there are no grounds for religious contention.

Consequently it is completely inaccurate to describe the Chinese—as social scientists, historians and missionaries have done—as Buddhists, Taoists, Confucianists or ancestor worshippers in the same sense that we classify Americans as Jews, Protestants or Catholics. The American *belongs* to a church or a temple, provides for its support, attends its services and goes to its social meetings. Protestant differentiation, in turn, compels him to be a Presbyterian or a Baptist. Yet he must not only be a Baptist,

but must choose between being a Northern Baptist or a Southern Baptist. Finally he is not only a Northern Baptist, but he is known also as a member of the First Baptist Church or the Third Baptist Church of Jonesville, Ohio. For the American way in religion is to be more and more exclusive, so that not only is my God the only true God while all others are false, but I cannot rest until my particular view of God has prevailed over all others.

The Chinese tendency is exactly the reverse. The Chinese may go to a Buddhist monastery to pray for a male heir, but he may proceed from there to a Taoist shrine where he beseeches a god to cure him of malaria. Ask any number of Chinese what their religion is and the answer of the majority will be that they have no particular religion, or that, since all religions benefit man in one way or another, they are equally good. Most Chinese temples are each dedicated to the worship of many gods and few family shrines are a sanctuary for but a single deity. There are many Chinese temples built expressly to house together Confucius, Buddha and Lao Tze, the founder of Taoism. In prayer meetings staged by several southwestern Chinese communities during World War II, I saw included at many an altar the images of not only the numerous Chinese deities but also Jesus Christ and Mohammed as well. For the Chinese way in religion is to be more and more inclusive so that my god, your god, his god and all gods, whether you or I know anything about them or not, must be equally honored or at least not be the objects of my contempt or yours.

These distinctive tendencies—the American tendency to exclude and the Chinese tendency to include—are fundamental,

affecting as they do all other significant qualities in Chinese and American religious behavior. For example, the Chinese believer resorts little to prayers, but most pious Americans regard prayers as the essence of religious worship. Furthermore, even when a Chinese does pray his utterances are little more than an express request for godly favors. On the other hand, the central focus of an American's prayers is introspection, a searching of the soul. Given the Chinese type of polytheistic belief, in which the worshipper reveres and seeks the favors of the gods but does not link himself with them or regard himself as permanently committed to them, intensive personalized prayers are as incongruous as they are unnecessary.

By proceeding from our analysis of the two distinctive viewpoints we can understand too why in the Chinese religious conception good and evil tend to be relative while to the religious American they are absolute. The polytheist holds some spirits to be evil, but their evilness is a matter of concern to him only if they hamper the work of the good spirits. Cholera epidemics are spread by Wen-giving spirits which seek to enter every household. The great Wen god is then invoked to send the trouble makers away. A drought is caused by demons called Han Pa. The Dragon God is called upon to destroy them so that rain will fall. Once such practical ends are served, the Chinese has no further interest in the evil spirits until the next emergency occurs. Neither does he have any urge to wage an incessant war upon them. For all spirits, if propitiated in the right way, may be good to men but any spirit, if displeased, may cause tragedy to befall them. This attitude is intrinsic to a belief system in which

the worlds of the dead and the living not only are similar but overlap.

The monotheist holds one God to be good in contradistinction to all others who are false and therefore evil. The followers of the One God not only refuse to compromise with that which is defined as false or evil, but His worshippers must seek out the false and the evil and eliminate them. To the monotheist, being good is synonymous with fighting evil. Since the latter is a constant measure of the former, good and evil do not only coexist, but are at war with one another regardless of time or circumstance. The wider context of this psychology is a life orientation in which the worlds of the living and of the dead are separate but also completely different.



Caste in India

Every society is in a continual process of organizing itself for countless ends. Among these ends is the preservation of institutions and cultural values. This reading discusses how one society has attempted to maintain cultural continuity through the system of social stratification known as caste. The author traces the historical development of caste, and he describes its present state and future prospects.

Caste is a word used to describe the system of social groupings into which most of the people of India are gathered. The Indian community is composed of a large number of distinct social groups, or castes. Basic to Hindu society, the caste system is the result of the association of many different types of people and numerous social and occupational groups within a common territory and cultural system.

It developed over a long period and in various ways. When the fair-skinned Aryans conquered North India around 1500 B.C., they introduced into Indian society a class division based on physical differences. The fair Aryans became the superior class; the darker-skinned aborigines were reduced to an inferior position in society. In the course of time other people entered India and took over a higher or lower place in the social system depending upon their power. Groups were also distinguished by their occupations and

professions. Since people tend to associate largely with members of their occupation, early in Indian history classes were differentiated on the basis of function and work. From these occupational groupings there developed group customs, group attitudes, and a keen feeling of group solidarity which set the members of each occupation apart from other members of the Indian community.

Castes grew out of religious differences. Some were formed by breaking off from other castes, while others were formed by outcastes who had lost their own caste status for one reason or another. Primitive tribes responded to the more sophisticated economic and social system developing around them in India by holding themselves aloof and further emphasizing their own peculiar taboos and customs. At times some of these tribes became low-caste Hindus, entering the caste system as a body.

A complicated social system arose out of

† Thomas Welty, *The Asians: Their Heritage and Their Destiny* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1963).

the associations of these physical, political, occupational, religious, and tribal separations. The Indian community divided into many distinct sections now referred to as castes. During the long course of India's history these castes grew and multiplied, as a continuous flow of new physical types, occupations, and other foreign elements had to be allocated a place somewhere within the community. Castes died out and new castes formed, but always the caste system remained the basis of the social order.

Social Hierarchy

Castes are arranged on a social scale rising from the Untouchables at the bottom to the Brahmins at the top. It is not always easy to fix the exact place of each caste on the scale, but Hindu society can be viewed broadly as a grouping of castes in different layers of the social strata. Three great caste groupings may be distinguished—the twice-born group, the once-born group, and the Untouchables.

The twice-born include the Brahmin, or priestly caste; the *Rajputs* and those who claim descent from the *Kshatriya*, or military caste; and the *Vaisya*, or mercantile and agricultural caste. These are the elite castes of India. The Brahmin caste traditionally ranks first among this group and its members are generally regarded with honor. This group is called twice-born because its members have two births, a physical birth when they are born into the world and a spiritual birth when they are initiated into the mysteries of religion and given the sacred thread to wear. The sacred thread is a kind of string which is looped

over and hangs from the left shoulder. The Brahmin's thread should be made of cotton, a *Kshatriya's* of hemp, and a *Vaisya's* of wool.

The once-born, or those who lack the second spiritual birth, are those castes who claim to be the modern representatives of the *Sudras*. The members of this group are engaged in all kinds of skilled and unskilled work which has no connotation of service to the twice-born. This group includes people ranging from farmers, artisans, landlords, and moneylenders, to those engaged in all types of unskilled labor.

Untouchables constitute the lowest social layer of the Indian community. They were formerly known as the Depressed Classes, and are now officially called the Scheduled Castes. Gandhi called them *Harijans*, or the "Children of God." The Untouchable, as the name indicates, cannot touch anything without contaminating it. Belief in the contaminating power of an Untouchable is so great that, in South India, a scale of distances was worked out within which different groups of Untouchables may not approach a Brahmin. For example, one kind of Untouchable may not come within eight yards of a Brahmin, another twelve yards, and still another sixteen yards. The members of this group perform those jobs which the Hindus consider most degrading: caring for and touching the dead, removing filth, sweeping, and working with leather.

Within each of these broad groups of twice-born, once-born, and Untouchables there is also an inner hierarchy. The Untouchables are divided into a bewildering number of castes organized on a graduated social scale. The gap between the lower

and higher castes of the Untouchable group is regarded by the members of this group as being as great as that between the Untouchables and the Brahmins.

Principal Characteristics of Caste

The principal characteristics of the caste system are: (1) members marry within the caste; (2) caste members eat and drink with each other and not with members of an inferior caste; (3) members practice a common occupation which is generally hereditary. Exceptions to all these characteristics can be found in India, especially with regard to the practice of a common occupation.

Marriage outside the subcaste is much more common today than formerly. Although such a practice is generally frowned upon, it does not bear the same stigma as marriage outside the main caste. The furor over a marriage outside the subcaste often dies down after a short period of time, but the social ostracism that results from a marriage outside the main caste is permanent.

There is some change taking place in India. Some modern Indians are marrying outside their castes. It is not uncommon to see newspaper advertisements, inserted by Indians who are looking for mates, frankly stating that caste is no obstacle to marriage.

Eating and Drinking

As a general rule, orthodox Hindus are required to dine with members of their caste only. The eating and drinking of the orthodox Hindu is carefully governed by

regulations which apply to the food itself, the persons who cook the food, the hands which serve the food, and the company with whom the food may be eaten.

The kind of food that the Hindu is permitted to eat varies with locality and caste. The Brahmin does not eat animal food or drink alcoholic beverages. Other castes frequently eat the meat of animals, especially mutton and goat's flesh. Most of the low castes in India are vegetarians, but this is a matter of necessity and not of choice. Most of them are too poor to buy meat.

The great majority of the Hindus will not eat the meat of the cow or peacock because they consider these animals sacred. The monkey is also honored and protected in many parts of India. The cow is revered by the Indians, and they commonly and lovingly refer to her as their "Mother." It is impossible for a Hindu to eat the flesh of a being he regards with such veneration and love. "May you eat beef!" is the worst curse one Hindu can fling at another.

Eating and Drinking Today

Industrialization and education have done much to relax the attitudes of orthodox Hindus with regard to eating and drinking.

Industrialization has created conditions which make the observance of food regulations extremely difficult. The building of factories which employ all kinds of castes and throw them helter-skelter together is one of these conditions. Industrialization is bringing increasing urbanization to India, and it is difficult to continue these elaborate ceremonial practices while away from home and living in a large urban area.

In a sample study of college students

four out of five indicated that they would be willing to dine with anybody regardless of caste or religion. It must be remembered that the views of college students are more liberal and rational than those of the majority.

Occupations

Throughout the long history of India there has generally been some degree of craft-exclusiveness between castes. It is not uncommon even today to have an Indian give his occupation when asked to what caste he belongs.

In the self-contained and self-supporting villages of India, certain occupations are recognized as inherited caste callings. It is expected that at least one son of the family belonging to such a functional caste will follow in his father's footsteps and take up the caste trade. Such occupational groups include, among others, blacksmiths, barbers, potters, and washermen.

But caste is no longer a definite indication of a person's occupation. Rarely is a person's work equated with a certain caste. Any Hindu engaged in priestly duties is most likely a Brahmin, and any Indian found washing clothes, at least in North India, is most probably a *Dhobi*. However, modern Brahmins are to be found today working in a great variety of occupations ranging from soldiering, police work, mail carrying, and work as messengers, to cooking and farming. Thus, although a man may be a Brahmin, he is not necessarily engaged in priestly work.

Education and the ambition of lower castes to rise higher on the caste hierarchy have also affected occupational patterns in

India. Many of the lower castes can elevate their status only by changing the character of their occupations. Any caste which deals with leather goods, sweeps the streets, or takes care of the dead must change its occupation to something else, say agriculture, if it wants to escape the low esteem in which it is held.

Although there are still a number of functional castes in India which have hereditary tradition, many of the members of these castes no longer take up hereditary occupations. There is no obligation to do so at the present time. Modern Indians are entering those occupations which promise them rewards, not merely those formerly practiced by their fathers.

Caste Government

The caste governs itself. It is an autonomous unit within Indian society which makes its own laws—many of them unwritten—and enforces them. The caste decides who will be members and who will not. It is the caste which expels members for one reason or another, and it is the caste which decides whether or not these members will be reaccepted into caste membership. The caste judges and condemns and the caste fixes the penalty for each offense.

The caste is commonly governed by a council composed of caste elders, prominent members, and a headman. Although the headman is sometimes elected, the office is more often hereditary. This governing body is called a *panchayat*.

The caste councils maintain strict discipline and watch their members carefully. Because of the close relationship that

necessarily exists among the various members of the caste, it is comparatively easy to find out even minor infractions of caste regulations. The life of caste members is somewhat analogous to the glass-house existence of people living in small towns. Lower castes are much stricter in the enforcement of caste regulations than higher castes and much better organized in the government and regulation of caste affairs.

The Future of Caste in India

During lengthy periods of chaos and disorganization, the caste system gave India a stability and continuity essential to the survival of its civilization. No matter under what alien king or conqueror the Indian was forced to live, he maintained his loyalty and devotion to the caste and in this way preserved Indian culture.

Caste has also given meaning and direction to the lives of the Indian people. Hindu writers often view caste as a co-operative rather than a competitive institution. For each man there is a special place in the community and a special function to perform. The acts performed by a man in a previous existence have determined his special place and duties, and caste provides a framework within which these particular duties can be carried out conveniently and co-operatively.

Nationalism has influenced modern Indian attitudes toward caste structure. It is urging people to stop thinking of themselves as belonging exclusively to a caste or subcaste and to think of themselves instead as primarily citizens of the Indian nation.

Virtues such as loyalty, obedience, and

devotion to the caste, which in the past helped to preserve India's cultural values and institutions, are now considered an obstacle in the path of India's unification. It is difficult to create a united nation while Indian society is divided. Therefore, Indian leaders argue, caste must go because it is delaying the growth of India into a modern nation-state. Modern India is dedicated to social progress. As long as millions of Indians are condemned to a lifetime of inferiority and hopeless degradation, declare the Indian leaders, there can be no real social progress in India. No society can make great social advances while millions of its members are segregated. These are the major reasons why many Indians think of caste as now being detrimental to the nation and society of India. The new constitution of India forbids discrimination because of caste.

The caste system of India is a living institution. Caste is not a rigid, unchanging system; it is a flexible system. It has survived because it has shown the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The caste system is undergoing a radical change today in response to the shifting environment of the present time. Its religious or metaphysical rationalization cannot endure unchanged in an industrial, scientific age. Modern times demand new forms of social organization. Caste will remain at the basis of social life in India for a long time to come, but it will be a changed and changing system.

Class

A knowledge of social class structure can tell us much about the basic assumptions of a society—for example, who should hold positions of power and authority, the status of various occupational groups, and the material and spiritual values of the society. Any detailed comparison of societies East and West will include comparisons and contrasts of class structures. In his attempt to give us a view of two ways of life, Dr. Hsu discusses the social class structure of the United States and class in traditional China.

The class structures of Chinese and American societies differ in several respects. First, the relative sizes of the classes are different. At least over half of the Americans are “middle class,” but over half, if not more, of the Chinese must be classed as “the poor.”

Another difference between the two peoples concerns the criteria for class membership. Among Americans wealth seems to be the most important single factor in determining an individual's place in a class. According to the studies of Richard Centers, this is especially true in the case of membership in the “upper class.” Lloyd Warner's studies make it clear that, of all wealths, that which is inherited ranks highest.

Wealth is important in China, but it alone could never place an individual in the highest class, whether his wealth came

by inheritance or personal industry. The most important criterion for membership in the highest class was until very recent times scholarship, consisting chiefly of mastery of the Confucian classics, which in turn led to imperial honors and bureaucratic positions.

Throughout the last twenty centuries not only did wealthy merchants buy titles in the government or send their children to schools as a means of improving their status, but even the aristocracy, who were one notch above the bureaucrats in power and wealth, and the military, who could sometimes seize the throne, were similarly affected.

The aristocracy under any dynasty consisted solely of the emperor and his relatives. The founders of Chinese dynasties were in some cases illiterate, such as that of Ming, and in other cases of foreign

[†] Francis L. K. Hsu, *Americans and Chinese* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1953).

origin, such as those of the Yuan (Mongol) and Ching (Manchu). All of them, without exception, engaged literati-bureaucrats to tutor their male children, and even the illiterate founders usually sought to improve themselves in this fashion. The result was that rulers of China were masters of the classics and they were proud of it.

The former situation of the military is equally instructive. The common soldiers, despised or feared like bandits, were considered outcasts, and even the officers enjoyed no equality with their civil counterparts of comparable rank. Yet those military officials who read the classics, wrote poetry, matched couplets, were fine calligraphists, and were known as "scholarly generals" ranked higher in social esteem than their fellow generals who knew strategy but lacked literary prowess.

We should note, too, that those who obtained their official positions or imperial titles by purchase were objects of contempt and ridicule by those who achieved distinction through examination.

Thus, although for many centuries the Chinese have spoken of themselves, in the order of their rating, as scholars, farmers, craftsmen and laborers, and merchants, the really important class division has always been between those who mastered the classics on the one hand, and the rest of society on the other.

There is nothing comparable to this picture in the United States. Here the factory wage earner does have a lower standing than a man with a college degree. Among the elite and many groups below it a college education for the children has become one of the "musts." But for centuries in China the most important positions under the monarch were filled

exclusively by scholars who had attained the highest honors by examination, while in the United States such positions are open to a wide variety of individuals, and educational achievement, though more important at the national level since the New Deal, remains as a relatively insignificant qualification for positions in state and local administrations where, historically at least, the government impinges most upon the lives of the people. In China scholarship led to bureaucratic power, which in turn brought wealth and prestige. In the United States the sequence is reversed since wealth, by and large, commands prestige and bureaucratic power, while scholarship is only a side line.

These differences between China and America, though interesting, are not fundamental. The fundamental distinction is to be found in how each people react to the *idea* of class. To the situation-centered Chinese, class is a group matter. His class does not only belong to himself and to his immediate family, but the distinction is shared also by his clan, his wider band of relatives and even his whole district. Since he is not pursued by insecurity, he can aspire upward without anxiety and he can mingle with those below without fearing that they may contaminate him.

To the individual-centered American, class is a personal attribute. His class belongs to himself; even the appearance of his wife and the achievement of his children are signs of his distinction. His relatives and his community may try to claim him, but he has no psychological bond with them. He strives mightily to enter the company of those above him and he is equally determined to avoid associating with those below lest they pull him down.

The distinction in China between the superior literati-bureaucrat group and the rest of society has always been clear-cut and without ambiguity. The external signs of class were rigid and obvious. The common people admitted their lowly status and deferred in speech and contact to members of the literati-bureaucracy, and the lower bureaucrats were similarly ceremonially obsequious toward higher ones.

In spite of these sharp distinctions, mobility between the two major classes has been both possible and without resistance from those quarters in which one might expect it. Most revealing is the Chinese attitude toward a change in status, for which they have two terms: "newly rich," and "recently prominent." The former is self-explanatory, and the latter describes those who have newly climbed the bureaucratic ladder. The first kind of people were sometimes slighted and ridiculed, but the second kind were accepted at once. In imperial times the most prominent families of the land, including that of the emperor, eagerly matched their daughters to men who had risen from complete obscurity to acquire the highest examination honors.

Class distinction is not so clear-cut in the United States. Not only is there a tendency for most Americans to regard themselves as belonging to the "middle class," but there is a great deal of overlapping between the classes. There are ministers and doctors who place themselves in the working class, just as there are skilled laborers who gain entry into the upper-middle circle.

The external attitudes of different classes toward each other tend to be toned down rather than played up because of the overall emphasis on equality.

Yet class climbing in America is a much more strenuous proposition than in China. It is strenuous not because of any lack of economic opportunity, but because those more fortunately situated tend to oppose the self-elevating efforts of those from below. This is done by refusing to admit the climbers into their residential areas, clubs, and even churches, or by snubbing them if they happen to get in. It seems hard to believe that class is still one of the greatest American barriers to marriage.

This resistance to encroachment from below, at any point on the scale, is matched by the intense desire on the part of those below to climb higher.

Finding security and contentment in a definite place among their kinship and communal relations who appreciate them for what they are rather than for how far they reach, [the Chinese] are not disposed to crash wealthier but unfamiliar neighborhoods. Conversely, once in a strange neighborhood they need not worry about being snubbed. One of the most popular axioms of the Chinese is "harmony among neighbors," and this means regardless of status.

The Japanese Family

This reading is a discussion of the Japanese family in history, and at the present time. Although primarily an economic unit, the Japanese family is also an important source of the individual's moral and aesthetic values. The subservience of women, arranged marriages, and the extended family system are important elements in Japanese culture. Although increasing urbanization and the American occupation have combined to mitigate differences between Japanese and Western societies, the older forms of Japanese social life have been slow to change.

The individual exists mainly to ensure the preservation, continuity, and good name of the family. Though physically a separate entity, the individual Japanese is looked upon as an extension of the larger group. This attitude often works great hardship upon the Japanese individual. In school, boys and girls work with the stern eyes of their families fixed upon them. Failure to pass injures the reputation of their entire family. The family, not just the boy and girl, has been discredited. In all his relations with outsiders, the individual child bears the full weight of family responsibility.

It is within the family system that the Japanese learn how to live in Japanese society. Within it a Japanese finds the whole social pattern of Japanese society. The head of the family possesses all authority, assumes

full responsibility for the status and continuity of the family, and is given the complete respect and obedience of all members. The young owe respect to the old, and the women owe loyalty and submissive service to the males. Wives are subordinate to their husbands, younger brothers to older brothers, and servants to the masters of the household. To a certain degree this same hierarchical pattern is found elsewhere in Japanese society. The political leader often stands toward his party members as the family head or elder brother toward the subordinate members of his family. Labor bosses are regarded as fathers of the laborers or as heads of great union families. Even large business firms, industrial plants, and military organizations are regarded as great family organizations, within which relationships are similar to

[†] Thomas Welty, *The Asians: Their Heritage and Their Destiny* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1963).

those within the immediate family. Ultimately the entire Japanese nation is regarded as one large national family whose head is the emperor, and the whole Japanese people owe him the same loyalty, respect, and obedience which they owe to their personal family and household head.

Structure and Economy of the Family

The traditional family, still widely prevalent, includes the head and his wife, the eldest son either by birth or adoption, his wife and children, and any unmarried children. This family might also include a retired head of the house and his spouse, that is to say, the surviving grandparents. Thus, there are two and sometimes three American-style families in each basic Japanese family.

Industrialization and modernization have had an effect upon the size of Japanese families. The modern marriage group commonly found in the cities of Japan consists of husband, wife, and children. Continued urbanization and increasing mobility are bringing about smaller families. Other reasons for these smaller families are the late marriages of younger sons who could not marry earlier because of financial reasons, the number of abortions, and increasing knowledge of birth control in the postwar years.

The household is the basic social unit of Japanese society. The household head represents the members at important community meetings and activities, and to him all official documents and messages sent to the household are addressed. He is responsible for the acts of the members of his household and, at times, has even been

arrested when a criminal from his household could not be apprehended.

The Japanese family is primarily an economic unit. It has a common budget and holds property in common. The family head, who acts as the trustee for the property and not as the owner, controls and is responsible for all the finances of the household, doling out the money as members need it and carefully scrutinizing all expenditures.

The Japanese family, particularly the rural family, plays an important role in spreading scarce resources and in cushioning its members against economic shock. Owing to the delicate balance that exists between the Japanese people and their resources, if there were no mutual aid on the part of the family members many persons would starve. Since the Japanese are somewhat averse and unaccustomed to receiving charity from the state, they depend upon their families to tide them over critical periods.

In the rural areas occupations still continue to be traditional. Generally, the eldest son carries on his father's occupation, whether it is farming, fishing, artisan work, or a combination of all three. In many cases the hired workers are still regarded as members of the family.

But here too some change is occurring. Whereas co-operative family enterprises were once the rule, today the breakdown of the extended family is leading to other forms of economic association. Industrial and agricultural co-operatives and voluntary organizations composed of people who do not belong to the same family, either immediate or extended, are becoming more and more common. Increasing numbers of younger sons are leaving the

family homes and going to the city where they are employed in work which keeps them separated from their ancestral home. As a result, in certain parts of Japan today there is no sharing outside the small immediate families which must depend upon their own efforts to the same extent and in much the same way that American families do.

Marriages. Marriages are arranged between families, not between individuals. Since the Second World War there has been more individual choice in the selection of mates, but even in these instances the families still negotiate the marriage contract and make the necessary preliminary arrangements.

When the preliminary arrangements have been negotiated to the satisfaction of both families, a date is set for the wedding. It is often chosen by astrologers who recommend a lucky day.

Children and Adoption. Children are wanted and loved in Japan. Above all the Japanese couple want a male child, because the family line is continued through the males. If there are no sons born, they can ensure the continuation of the family by adopting a son.

A couple may adopt the younger son of the brother of the family head. If this is not possible, then a child of one of their other relatives is adopted. Occasionally, when a couple have had a daughter but no son, they will adopt a boy who then marries their daughter and assumes their surname. He thereby becomes their son, and he will inherit their property when they die.

Adoptions are legalized when they are recorded in the *koseki*, or family register, which is kept in the police station of the

village to which the family is attached. This all-important family register indicates the legal and social status of the family members. Legal marriage in Japan consists in the formal transfer of the bride's registration by her father to the *koseki* of the groom's family. Both adoptions and marriages can be dissolved when they turn out to be undesirable.

Family Relationships

Parents and Children. The Japanese attach more importance to the relationship between parents and children than to the relationship between husband and wife. Theoretically, Japanese parents have almost unlimited power over their children, but, practically speaking, they are restrained by custom, society, relatives, and the law. On the other hand, children are subject to these same pressures, which require them to be obedient and respectful in all cases to their parents. Filial piety is regarded by the Japanese as the foundation of all virtues, and indeed it is the fundamental virtue upon which the Japanese have built their social patterns.

Although traditional attitudes toward the relationship between parents and children still pervade Japanese thought and practice, modern forces sweeping Japan are making children more independent of their parents. The conflict between traditional and modern concepts of life, and the new knowledge to which children are exposed in school, weakens the power of the parents. Younger sons who are forced to leave the family and go elsewhere in search of a living become indifferent to the influence of their parents. The growing

preference for small families and the increasing number of Japanese living in the cities are other circumstances contributing to the decline of patriarchal power.

Husband and Wife. Traditionally, and to a large extent even today, the loyalties of the husband are directed toward his parents and blood-relatives rather than his wife. His kin come first and his wife second. If necessary, the dutiful Japanese son would give up his wife if his father or mother disapproved of her. It is the wife's duty to prove her worth to the boy's parents. Most Japanese marriages still take place for the benefit of the man's house. It is in the man's house that the wife must live and work, and it is to the success of his family that she must devote all her energies. He generally controls the family property, and he is thought to be mentally and physically superior to the woman.

This attitude is being modified in modern Japan to the same extent that other traditional social attitudes and customs are being modified. Increasing urbanization is creating smaller families in which the orientation of the husband is toward the wife rather than toward blood relatives who do not live with them. Under these conditions there is more companionship between husband and wife, greater emphasis upon the advice of the wife, and more and more freedom of association and intimacy.

The Family Council

Rich and noble families have for generations possessed family codes which govern the behavior and activities of the family members. Of more practical importance is

the family council which makes decisions on all matters which the family head considers important enough to bring to the council's attention. Such matters are marriages, adoptions, investments, the education of family members (especially beyond the compulsory levels), funerals, and other weighty occasions.

Each household has a family council. Members of one family council may belong to other family councils at the same time, and thus many households are tied together by the members of the family councils. Because of this web of interconnected councils staffed by blood relatives, it can be said with some truth that the Japanese are tied together in one large family.

Family councils are solicitous about the good name of the families they watch over. The name must not be tarnished in any way. One of the common ways for a family to acquire a bad name is to have some black deed recorded against it on the official register. The family council is careful lest this occur, because the living, the dead, and the still unborn are all affected by such an act.

Family councils have functions besides those of decision-making with regard to important family matters. These councils provide the kinsmen with mutual support, even though members may be scattered throughout the countryside and in the cities. Branch houses are tied to the main houses, and scattered blood-relatives to each other. This system tends to preserve the older forms of Japanese social life and slow up the process of change which is being felt throughout Japanese society.

People of the Golden Land

In the following condensed article Daw Mi Mi Khaing provides a word-picture of Burmese character and customs. The method employed by the author for conveying an understanding of Burmese culture is known as description of national character, or basic personality. It is a method used in varying ways and for somewhat different purposes by psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists.

To our neighbors in India, as far back as the times of the Buddha, Burma was known as "the golden land." And so it still seems to the Burmese today, who, as figures for emigration will prove, have no desire to live anywhere else. This national contentment has its roots in the facts of our geography, our religion, and our history.

Burma's geography is that of an abundant, warm, and well-watered land, where raising enough food for the population has never been difficult. Our religion is a form of Buddhism which tempers and moderates, and which, as it has evolved over the centuries, absorbing elements from several cultures, has come to provide a full range of activity for the many rather than a difficult mystic philosophy for the few. And the history of the Burmese has been that of a nation long victorious over all neighbors until a conquest by the British, which, after only some sixty years of colo-

nial subjugation, was ended with apparent ease. These factors have made us relaxed and generous; neither fanatical nor preoccupied; proud, and in a great many ways unusually contented with ourselves.

The Burmese society of today has developed from about fifteen centuries of a rural, agricultural way of life in which the village, and within the village the family, were the controlling units. With us, family ties are always very strong—not so much from rigid traditions as from natural affections allowed full play.

The Burmese family is a loosely defined unit, its membership varying with the circumstances. Sons and daughters and sisters, aunts and uncles acquired by marriage, may or may not be incorporated; there is no rule. But most Burmese have a warmhearted desire for as many relatives as possible, including cousins and in-laws. Our word for "relative" has the same root as the one for "friend."

† Daw Mi Mi Khaing, "People of the Golden Land," *Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1958).

Such a concept extends the family in the most natural way to friends and so to neighbors—in the country to the whole village, and in the city to the *yatkvet*, or neighborhood. There is hardly any activity, apart from the daily routine of work, in which all of the neighbors do not participate. And Burmese life is rich in opportunities for communal experience.

There will always be a gathering for the naming ceremony of a month-old child, when the baby's hair is cut and washed for the first time.

Far more elaborate preparations will be made for the ceremonies which mark the passing from childhood into adolescence. For a boy, this is one of the most important events in his life, because, even though he does not plan to be a monk, he will be taken into one of our Buddhist monasteries for a week's novitiate. In this *shinpyu* ritual, the boy's head is shaved to symbolize his renunciation of the world as he temporarily enters the Sangha, the Holy Order of those who consecrate their lives to the teaching of the Buddha. For a week, or longer if he wishes, the lad will wear the orange robe of the monks, go out each morning with a bowl to beg his food, and practice the austerities of the monastic life. But first, at the *shinpyu*, he will be dressed in his finest clothes to receive gifts from the guests at a feast that will be as lavish as possible, with music or better still a troupe of entertainers.

While we do have religious orders for women, they attract far fewer followers than do the monasteries, and our girls do not undergo any religious initiation. For them, the *nahtwin*, the ceremony which takes place at the same time as their brother's *shinpyu*, and is often celebrated

with it, is entirely secular and social in character. It is the boring of the ears for the first pair of gold earrings, for which the little girl is dressed in a costume and gilded headdress such as were worn by the ladies-in-waiting at the court of our former kings in Mandalay.

There are many other occasions which a Burmese may observe with a celebration: a housewarming; a birthday when he feels that he has reached a blessed plenitude; a sudden remembrance of the gratitude he owes his dead mother; or any other time that he feels good and happy, or, alternatively, low in spirits and needing the blessings of a good deed done.

One of our most common, and popular, forms of social gathering is the ceremonial offering of a meal to a group of *phongyis*, usually monks from the neighborhood monastery.

Feeding the monks gives full scope for the great love all we Burmese have for giving away or spending our resources—we are not a people who save or hoard—the importance that we attach to good eating, and our preference for the maximum informality and liveliness.

In our warm climate we like, except in the monsoon months, to be outdoors, and our traditions give us many opportunities to join festival processions to the monastery or the pagoda, each dressed in his best and bearing gifts or offerings. The calendar, which in Burma is a lunar one, counted by the days of the moon's waxing and waning, is liberally sprinkled with holidays.

Around the New Year, which for us usually falls on the 13th of April, we have our tumultuous *Thingyan*, the water festival, comparable to the Indian *Holi*. In

times gone by this was more quiet, with the young gently sprinkling scented water on the old in token of their deference. Today it has become a wild outburst of mass dousing and soaking, a chance to release pent-up energy at the time of our hottest weather.

Thingyan is also the time for making fun of our betters, and particularly the politicians. In Rangoon elaborate floats are prepared on which young people in regalia perform song and dance shows, lampooning officialdom in salty and satiric verses composed for the occasion. *Thingyan* is a time for dancing, too, though, actually, dancing comes so naturally to the Burmese that, in one form or another, it is part of almost all our festivals.

At the full moon of Kason (in early May) we remember the enlightenment of the Buddha beneath a bo tree in the Ganges plain by going to pour water on our own bos.

Soon after Kason the monsoon breaks and the rains come. All during Wa, the Buddhist Lent, for three months, it rains.

In October the rains peter out. Comes the full moon of Thadingyut and another festival. This is our springtime. There is a rush of weddings which were banned during Lent, and a greater rush to make gifts to the monks, for this is the one month when their saffron robes may be presented.

Our next full moon, Tazaungmon (in November), is perhaps the finest of the year; cool air, clear skies, the moon shining bright and big. Then smoke balloons in the shape of huge animals are sent aloft, and the neighborhood processions vie with each other in having the most beautiful *padaythabin*, a fabulous, mythical tree hung

with gifts of all kinds for the monasteries.

And so through the Christian Nativity which passes unrecognized for itself but now takes color from our new Independence celebrations on January 4. Then in March it is Tabaung, and the mad winds are scattering the roads with flaming butea blossoms, scarlet cotton-tree flowers, the fragrant *ingyin* and the white bauhinia. This is our harvest season, when for long ages our most renowned pagodas have held their annual fairs to which the country people flock, on foot or by oxcart, from miles around. After this, while the frangipani and the oleanders flower, the heat rises again and people sweat and grumble for another month till the miraculous "mango showers" of mid-April announce another New Year.

Burmese society is happy, I think, partly because its different elements are so well adjusted to each other. The old feel neither unwanted nor an urge to behave like the young when there is a definite function for them in every festivity and a role in the home routine which the younger members are only too glad to have discharged. So it is with other associations: for example, the relationship between men and women.

There is no "battle of the sexes" in Burma. Burmese women feel the spiritual superiority in a man. It is simply a part of good manners, of what is pleasurable and seemly, to respect the person of a male, to give precedence to his manhood on all social occasions, and to attend to his wants. But in the all-important matters of money, of divorce, of inheritance, of freedom of movement, the right of giving advice, of transacting business or of putting one's own name alongside a husband's on the

shop front, women admit no inferiority. Thus they serve without shackles, and are equal without impairing the pride of masculinity.

Or consider the relation of children to grown-ups. Though children are indulged to an extreme degree in some things, the basis of the love they are shown is their completely subordinate status to adults. No stormy period of adolescent rebelliousness against elders is anticipated. The doctrine of respect is something the growing child repeats incessantly: to the Buddha, his doctrine, his order, to parents and to teachers respect is due—a respect described as compounded of fear and love. The term “teacher” is not confined to the schoolroom. In the broad sense of “guide and friend,” it is extended to any loved

benefactor, no matter what his walk in life.

In Burma you will find a minimum of friction between the rich and the poor. Where little importance is attached to the amassing of material possessions there is little difference in the clothing, food, or housing of a man and his poorer or richer neighbor. Class distinctions hardly operate. The true mark of a refined man being his correct bearing toward all ages, his mastery of religious teachings and sacred literature, and his observance of the precepts of normal living, a poor man could win a lottery and move with ease among the wealthiest.

Rarely does a Burmese feel frustrated. No impetus of high ambition drives him to work hard or leaves him disappointed when he fails. Few things cut deep. Because



The Burmese people are characterized by cleanliness and joy of living. This is a town washing platform on the Irrawaddy River where women and children bathe themselves and wash their silk and cotton garments.

we take things so lightly, faults are easily condoned. If a man falls below the standards set by society, his shortcomings will be debated and decried, but if he has not been guilty of inhumanity or sacrilege, he is accepted quite soon again.

There is little feeling of insecurity among us; the "age of anxiety" has not yet reached Burma. A man may lose his livelihood, but his wants are few: some articles of light clothing, a mat and pillow in part of a room, a share in the rice pot for himself and his family without great damage to his prestige in the house of one relative or another.

Friends from abroad often say to me: "It's wonderful how happy you Burmese all seem to be, but is your social system, fine as it is for the individual, really good for the country?" Alas! I must confess that in terms of orderly urban communities, of unremitting hard work and nation-building, of developing our resources to give an increasing population more elaborate modern living standards our qualities, our very contentment, betray us.

The great gregariousness and love of festivity leave little time for sustained application to a career. The happy social system that guarantees freedom from want and loneliness for the great majority spares little of a man's income for other uses. When he contributes toward every funeral, wedding, or religious celebration in his community, he is naturally content to own few household goods, but he has little left, either, to subscribe to public charities—the care of the blind, the leprous, the crippled, the uneducated. Our philanthropy is personal and religious, rather than broadly social. The ease of dependence on an elder,

or a patron, also saps initiative. It is a compliment often paid the fortunate to say that a person "shelters in their strength." And then there is the tenderness of this Burmese "strength." It is apt to be hurt if embarrassment or constraint of any sort is caused to another by it. This fear of abusing our strength also prevents us, in professional life, from pointing out mistakes or shortcomings for fear of humiliating, or assuming uncourteous authority over others. It is no wonder that efficiency in business or civil administration still eludes us. And our easygoing readiness to condone, to forgive, does not create the kind of public opinion needed to mold reliable workers dedicated to their professions, or even to keep our settlements trim and sanitary.

Add to this our proud history. The spirit of our ancestors who marched victorious on bare feet from Assam in the west to Cambodia in the east is still with us. The pride in an isolated inland culture that saw no real superiority in anything from the outside world for many centuries is hard to eradicate. Inherited by a people who are naturally clever and animated, who are endowed with artistic talents and with physical beauty, who live in a social system that allows a sense of both spiritual and worldly fulfillment by its own standards, it has produced an irrepressible élan and a charming insouciance, but also a slapdash confidence about things in general, a fatal lack of humility in approaching any task, and, since we have a sense of humor, sufficient amusement at our own national shortcomings to take the edge off our present hardships—without, however, any conviction of inferiority to any other race of people.

Changing Patterns



Three Generations in My Calcutta Family

Out of historical context, any treatment of a culture's institutions tends to be abstract and superficial. Values, customs, and institutions do not come into being full-blown, but change over periods of time and from place to place. This selection provides a view of modern India's changing values and of the old institutions that have undergone considerable strain in their process of modification.

My family has been settled in the city for four generations. My great-grandfather was a man learned in the classical Sanskrit language, according to our caste profession, and taught in the Sanskrit College of Calcutta. [My grandfather] availed himself of the formal school education of that time, learned the Sanskrit language, and studied Ayurvedha, the traditional science of Indian medicine. In time he became a renowned physician, and a prosperous householder. When he had fully established himself he severed all claims on the ancestral property in the village, leaving his share to go to his kinsmen. As a result, none of his descendants has ever seen the original village home.

My grandfather married in his late teens, and my grandmother was then about 10 years old. In those days child marriage was customary in our country. It was believed that a girl made good adjustments with her husband's relatives if she came to his house

as a child. After the marriage ceremony she continued to live in her parental home until she came of age, but her in-law relations were decided for her before she developed the power of discrimination.

My grandparents had a large family characteristic of that time. They had eleven children, six girls and five boys.

My grandmother took great pride in the size of her family and the number of kin relations that grew through their marriages. The older girls were married as children, and the younger girls were married in their teens according to the changing standards of the day. The boys brought in their wives one after another to fill the emptiness left by the girls. All these marriages were arranged by parents or other relatives of both sides. After marriage a girl was brought into a house filled with all her husband's kinfolk. After the first seven days' stay, most of which time was spent in the performance of rit-

† Barbara Ward, ed., *Women in the New Asia* (Paris: UNESCO, 1963).

uals, the girl was returned to her parents' house. If she was under age it was expected that she would stay there for some years. But even after a girl became properly established in her husband's house and had many children, she went back to her parents' house periodically for some days or weeks as a rest from her duties in her husband's house.

My father was the third son in the family and was married at 18 years of age, my mother being then 13. The age of marriage for both the sexes has been increasing steadily in our society until today no definite limit exists for the marriageable age. My brother married last year at the age of 30 and his bride was then 21 years old. My father and two of my older uncles were college students when they married. My grandfather's status and prosperity were taken into account by the girl's parents when they negotiated the marriages, and the health and appearance of the boys and their future prospects were also considered.

My grandmother could read and write in the vernacular, and in her younger days spent much time in reading the sacred books. When my grandmother's daughters were growing up, much disparity remained between the education of boys and girls in our society. While the boys received training in English in the schools and colleges, and expected to enter any of the modern professions, the girls received only rudimentary vernacular education in schools or at home. It was not expected that girls should complete high school and enter college. Girls were expected to devote their whole time to housework right after their marriage.

In my generation the expectations con-

cerning female education changed greatly. The possibility of going to college was held up to me as an ideal. It is now expected that girls should have some years of college education before they marry. My brother's wife had finished college when she was married. Before the second world war few girls were expected to make careers for themselves, and the education given to them was simply to prepare them for a better life. But after the war another great change came in our society in the role of the working women. With the partition of India, which caused thousands of men and women to leave their homes in search of new ones, and the increasing prices which came as the aftermath of war, many families found that they could no longer give their women the protection and security which had long been their due. The refugee girls groped their way into any occupation for which they were fitted. Whereas fifteen years ago a family would be ashamed to let a girl go to work and supplement the family income, working women now arouse much admiration from general society.

The trend towards small families is most apparent in the educated levels of our society today, even when their women are not working. Whereas my grandparents had eleven children, my parents and their respective brothers had one to three children each. This change is associated with many factors. Upper- and middle-class people are conscious of the disadvantages of a high birth-rate, and openly discuss the situation. The responsibility of bringing up children is taken more seriously by the parents now than in the time of my grandfather. Moreover, even from my mother's time, women in our society have

expressed the feeling that looking after children in their early years is very hard work, and they do not want to repeat the experience too often. Two or three children were thought to be sufficient, and when they came to a responsible age, the mothers expected to have some time for other interests.

My grandmother kept the full responsibility for the management of our household as long as she was alive. She would rise early in the morning and worship the household deity. It is compulsory for worship to be performed every day, and if no member of the family is competent to carry out this religious act, a priest may be employed instead. In our house, after my great-grandmother died, my grandmother performed the daily worship, and after her my father, but now we have a daily priest.

In my grandmother's time marriages between members of different castes were not at all recognized. When my grandmother was a little girl intercaste marriage was introduced in a new sect of the Hindus called the Brahmo Samaj. They attempted to form a casteless society by promoting intercaste marriage and other social changes. Since marriages between castes were not tolerated at all in the traditional society, a secular marriage act was passed in 1872. By this act marriage necessitated a statement by the marrying parties that they did not belong to any of the existing religious faiths. Since caste was still a significant part of the Hindu social order, such secular marriages between castes made those who contracted them suffer from social ostracism, and the Brahmo Samaj became a distinct group on its own.

One of the greatest changes between

my grandmother's time and mine is the acceptance of intercaste marriage in Hindu society at large. Until 1954 intercaste marriages could be performed only under the act of 1872. At the time of the marriage a formal renunciation of all religions was made, in accordance with the provision of the act of 1872, but it was taken very lightly, and the marrying parties did not consider themselves to be non-Hindus. Finally, in 1955, the Hindu Code Bill was passed by the Union Government. This bill gave recognition to intercaste marriage among Hindus. In secular marriages the declaration of having no religion was no longer necessary, and marriages performed with sacred rituals in the traditional manner but between members of different castes were held legal.

Intercaste marriage with religious ceremonies takes place only when the families of both the parties are agreeable to the marriage, as the religious ceremonies demand that certain acts be performed by certain family members. These days everybody expects that after the marriage the families will be at some time reconciled.

Another great change that has been introduced in our society since 1955 concerns women's inheritance. In my grandmother's time, and even before that, women were expected to lead dependent lives. Since sons inherited their father's property, girls inherited only when they had no brothers. Marriage offered complete security to a girl, and as her formal ties with her parents were broken at marriage it was customary to give her a dowry including clothes, jewellery and money. The jewellery was completely her personal property, and her husband had no right over it unless she gave it to him. Much

value was, therefore, put on the possession of valuable jewellery by the women, as it could be exchanged for ready money in times of need. It is much easier to sell jewellery than it is to sell land or any other property.

The equality of women in educational and occupational fields brought about the feeling that the property rules should also be changed. The new code passed in 1955 gave girls the right to some share of their father's property. The high valuation given to the integrity of the joint household in our country, however, produced a dilemma. In the joint household the property is maintained by a group of brothers. If the sisters take out certain portions of property belonging to a joint household, the institution would naturally be disrupted. Certain clauses are, therefore, added in the new code giving preferential rights to male heirs if the property is maintained as a joint household.

If girls are to inherit equally, the giving of dowries would become a problem, for girls would have a double advantage. Legislation to stop dowries and expensive gifts at the time of marriage was lately being considered in the Indian Parliament. Actually, such changes can come about only when the people themselves introduce the changes, and not by the passing of laws. So even though laws have been passed to give women rights to their father's property, I would say that not much change has taken place in this field between my grandmother's time and mine, although my mother and I can vote whereas my grandmother could not.

All social changes are interrelated, and it is to be expected that changes in one element of society would necessarily be

accompanied by changes in the other elements. Changes come most easily in matters which are least sentimentally evaluated by the society. The voting rights of women are accepted without any hesitation. The attainment of higher education by girls was easier than their entrance into occupational fields where they come into contact and competition with men. Yet the undertaking of careers by women was more easily accepted than their selection of their own husbands and their taking the initiative for their own marriage. Even now individuals marrying of their own choice try to make it look as if their families negotiated the marriage for them, and a girl marrying of her own will does not normally expect to live away from her husband's kinfolk. As a matter of fact, it is because she passes so completely into her husband's family that the need for equal rights of inheritance has not been as hardly pressed as it would have been otherwise. A woman still gets a great deal of protection from her husband's family members if she becomes a widow. And then if she has no one to look after her in her husband's house, she can come to live in her father's house as in the past. In the past it has often been that if a woman inherited property, because she had no brothers, she looked on it as belonging to her sons rather than to herself, and she may still feel like this even now if she inherits through the new laws. The security of property rights is needed mainly when a woman has to make her place in the world all alone. In the past it has been the lot—and the good fortune—of the Indian woman to have a great many kin relations; what she may have to face in the future we can only wait and see.

The People of Japan

Pearl Buck gives us a view of people and life in contemporary Japan. As is the case with Reading eleven on Burmese culture, the emphasis is on basic personality, or national character. With this as a groundwork for the development of insights and understandings, the author discusses some of the directions taken by Japanese society since World War II.

No, customs and ways of thinking are not always easy to get used to. We seem to be very different, we Americans and our Japanese friends. Yet we are not. The more we know about each other, the less our differences will seem, and more complete understanding will come eventually if we continue to make meaningful contact with each other. We have become accustomed to British understatement and Irish hyperbole; why should we not, now, accept and understand Japanese ambiguity? When we do, we will see that our differences are more apparent than real, and that some of the barriers between us are not barriers but merely fences.

It is hard to know how to give and receive the gift of love, even hard sometimes to recognize it for what it is. Contrary to Western belief, the Japanese are a warm and demonstrative people. If you have reached them and they feel your warmth for them, they will respond with

an even greater warmth that has nothing to do with form, politeness, tradition. They do not kiss, for that is not their custom, but they come to you with open arms and put those arms around you. They hold your hand; they give you small, carefully selected and beautifully wrapped gifts, and they serve you in every way they know. Your happiness is their concern, so they try to take you to beautiful places and show you things they think will make you happy, and then they will hold your hand again.

It has been said, too, that the Japanese, because of their rigid and sometimes artificial code of discipline, have little sense of humor. I myself think that this is disproved in many of their writings, if nothing else, but it is quite true that they are not sure of laughter. I think they have become a little confused by humor, or rather the means of expressing their appreciation of it, because in the past they were taught to laugh artificially to hide their feelings rather than to

[†] Pearl S. Buck, *People of Japan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1966).

show them. Having used laughter as a means of concealing pain and embarrassment, they find it difficult to laugh spontaneously at what we think of as the right times. Yet, without having a finely honed wit, they do appreciate humor, they do have a sense of the ridiculous, and they do sometimes laugh as readily as any American.

It is also commonly believed that the Japanese have what I might call a strong herd instinct and that they are afraid to be different from their fellows. This is particularly true when they are thinking in terms of family and parents, but it is true in other areas as well. Even in their dress they do not like to show individuality. The young man who leaves college and puts on the gray flannel suit of the zaibatsu is one example, and there are many such. For all Japanese there is a proper attire for everything and a proper time to change. With the official arrival of summer the coats come off and the sea of white shirts on the station platforms is overwhelming. Not green, gray, blue, red, yellow, brown, tan, or even off-white. No, white to the right, white to the left, so ride the six million on their way to work.

This conformism permeates Japanese life, and customs and formalities still hold firm, especially in the upper and middle strata. For instance, a young American friend of mine wanted to take his Japanese wife to the beach on the fifteenth of June. It was a hot day, he told me, and perfect for swimming. But his wife objected strenuously because, as she said, "It's not the first of July yet!" Japan being a man's country, they went anyway. The young wife was very embarrassed at being party to such a social error, but she need not

have been. No one saw them, for there was not another soul in sight. On July 1, the official beginning of summer and therefore the right time to go to the beach, they went again. The day was foggy and unpleasant, but the beach was crowded.

Summer is also the time to climb Mount Fuji. Climbing season begins, with the swimming, on July 1, so up they go for 12,000 feet, four and five abreast like shoppers at a bargain sale. Why? Because it is the thing to do. Of course this is not the only day on which the Japanese climb Fuji, for they love their mountain and visit it frequently on summer weekends, but it is the day most favored by custom.

These are not, of course, alarming examples of Japanese collective-mindedness, but they do reveal something of the strong Japanese tendency to function as part of a group rather than as individuals.

Does this conformism mean that the Japanese would make good followers for some demagogue yet to emerge? Yes, there is always the danger, because such men have emerged in the past, although it is true that they were iconoclastic demagogues rather than nationalists. The danger lies not so much, perhaps, with a demagogue as with a demagogic faction, for the Japanese are more inclined to follow movements than individuals. Take for example the rise of the Soka Gakkai. It grew in a few short years from an evangelistic, quasi-Buddhist cult into a huge semi-religious, semi-military organization which is now assuming significant political status. Its members number in the millions, and they are dutiful voters. The Soka Gakkai philosophy is an ancient one based on the only Buddhist sect which was, like Christianity, intolerant of all other reli-

gions. Strong personal pressure is used to force persons to join the organization, which is administered by a system of block leaders in a manner reminiscent of Nazism. Through its political arm, Komeito, or Clean Government Party, Soka Gakkai is the third largest force in Japanese government today, holding the balance of power in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly after siphoning votes away from both Socialists and Liberal-Democrats. Some Japanese government officials believe that if Komeito succeeds in developing a secular image dissociated from the fanaticism of Soka Gakkai, it may well be running the country within a few years. Soka Gakkai will, of course, still be behind it.

Whether it achieves the great heights predicted for it remains to be seen. It is likely that the even greater organization that is Japanese society will remain strong enough in its traditions so that none of the new cults, not even Soka Gakkai, will rise to dangerous power. At any rate, the Japanese people do not want another experience with militaristic fanaticism.

What *do* they want? In their present national mood, the Japanese people want things, material things. They do not altogether understand the Westerner's delight in Japanese ways of living. In the old days the Japanese people had few wants, or, more correctly, they refrained from wanting what they could not afford. Frugality was not considered a hardship but a dignified way of life, an idea strongly encouraged by the lords and masters. Now, except in the back country where old ideas and standards still prevail, austerity is giving way to relative affluence, and with the change, new wants are being discovered. A revolution of expectations is in

progress. This is not to say the revolution is an immodest one, by American standards. A car is still a luxury item, and though most homes have television, most, also, have septic tanks. The Japanese work hard, go to bed early, and do well on the yen equivalent of a hundred to a hundred and fifty dollars per month. But their bursting vitality, now concentrated on achieving "the good life" instead of armament and empire, is carrying them fast along the road Americans have already traveled. May the gods of Asia have mercy!

Yet even more than things, the Japanese want peace, above all else, *peace*. They feel strongly on two points besides—namely, trade with Red China, and the status of Okinawa. They accept the present state of their homeland, American bases everywhere, and even their trouble with Russia over the northern islands and the fishing grounds. But they are not satisfied or even quiescent about Red China and Okinawa.

Japan is, after all, an Asian nation with Asian habits of thought. There is a strong feeling of racial and cultural affinity for the Chinese, and satisfaction that China has succeeded in throwing off European—which means, to them, Russian—domination. There is also a leaning toward Marxism and socialism on the part of many Japanese intellectuals, who turned to the left in opposition to prewar militarism, and have never changed since then. Of course the Liberal-Democratic government goes along with the West on China policy but, while refusing to recognize Peking, Japan is, unofficially, increasing trade and cultural relations with the Communists.

Conclusions

1. What can you deduce from the readings about the influence of religion upon an individual's attitudes toward his family, his neighbors, and his country in Asia? How would your own attitudes be different if you were a Buddhist? A Hindu? A Confucian? A Communist?
2. Many of the readings deal with the changes that are occurring in Asian life. What elements of Asian culture do you think have been changed by Western cultures? What changes have come about through the natural evolution of cultural patterns?
3. How do the differences between generations in Asia compare to those in the United States?
4. How important is etiquette in America? Do you think the forces shaping Asian manners are similar or different from those which have shaped your own?
5. From the readings, what can you deduce about the influence of one culture upon another? How much influence does knowledge of other cultures have upon actual cultural practices in any country?

Suggested Readings

Basham, A. L. *The Wonder That Was India*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959.* The author surveys many aspects of traditional Indian culture. Much of the book deals with institutions such as marriage and the family, religion, education, and law. Interesting and vivid are the author's descriptions of every-day life in ancient India.

Fitzgerald, C. P. *China: A Short Cultural History*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962. The author traces the history of China from prehistoric times to the end of the nineteenth century. Religion, literature, and art receive special attention.

Gandhi, Mohandas K. *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.* Gandhi weaves the chief events of his life together with his search for spiritual truth to show the development of his philosophy of truth through non-violence.

Metraux, Guy S. and Crouzet, Francois. *The New Asia*, New York: Mentor, 1965.* *The New Asia* is a historical description of Asian responses to the impact of Western institutions during the last two hundred years.

Statler, Oliver. *Japanese Inn*, New York: Pyramid Publications, Inc., 1962.* The reader is provided a kaleidoscopic and accurate view of Japanese history. The book is well illustrated with the works of some of Japan's most famous artists.

*Paperbound Edition.

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